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RP gov't, MILF negotiators say peace is near

■ BUSINESS / B1
P20B of PLDT value wiped out; execs puzzled by steep drop in a day

■ NEWS / A2
Palace, Senate on collision course over EO 464, budget

■ LIFESTYLE / C2
List for lovers: Where to go for wine and roses and cooking up romance

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, February 9, 2006 ** 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 63

More woes for Lafayette surface in House hearing

By Michael Lim Ubac

BASIC WOES FOR LAFAYETTE PHILIPPINES INC. (LFP) echoes items on Roxas-Roxas Island in Albay figured in two toxic spills last year.

The House committee on natural resources yesterday claimed to have discovered that the company was wholly owned by an Australian-Malaysian consortium, in violation of the 60-40 capitalization requirement in favor of Filipinos.

NEWS A4

GMA no teachers' pet

THE "TEACHER ACT" that President Macapagal-Arroyo pulled off the other day at a public elementary school did not sit well with retired teachers and students who said she was unqualified to be among them.

"What values will our schoolchildren learn from

LIFE A1

Pacquiao, SMC sign mega contract

LIMELIGHT BURNS: At the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, Joanna Rose Bacena is the center of media attention as she files a criminal complaint against her former lover.

By Marc Anthony Reyes and Dianne Lucas

HE DODGED QUESTIONS ABOUT a love child with the same quickness and finesse he class punches thrown at him inside the ring.

"Let's just stick to boxing," said world boxing icon Manny Pacquiao during a press conference yesterday announcing his multi-million-peso record-breaking endorsement deal with food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

The arrangement with the "People's Champ" would make Pacquiao the biggest endorser of SMC products, surpassing the late actor Fernando Poe Jr., the record holder.

PACQUIAO A7

BOTTOMS UP: "One-of-a-kind deal," San Miguel Corp. describes its "lifetime partnership" with Manny Pacquiao. SMC president/CEO Ramon Ang toasts the Pacman.

Prober says sorry, but...

Corpus stands by his 'animal' remarks as 'it is the truth'

By Norman Bordadora, Christine O. Avendaño, and Armand N. Nevarez

INTERIOR UNDERSECretary Marius Corpus yesterday said firsthand accounts of the conditions of the people who tried to get into the first-anniversary show of ABS-CBN's "Wowowee" were the basis of his earlier remark that they were "manipulated and treated like animals."

In an interview with ABS-CBN's dzMM radio, Corpus stood by his remark but denied that he had meant to put the network or any of its executives in a bad light.

He made the remark during a press conference called on Tuesday to present the report of the inter-agency Task Force Ultra, which he chairs, on the Feb. 4 stampede that killed 74 people and injured hundreds of others.

"It was not my intention to malign ABS-CBN chair and chief executive officer Eugenio Lopez

PROBE A6

ORPHANED of their mother Nita Ballodita, siblings Jenny, Jane and Ross Ballodita have received P10,000 in assistance from ABS-CBN.

LAST TWO PATIENTS at the Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City: One of them is Ernelia Dy who suffered a broken leg.

ABS-CBN questions credibility of task force

By DJ Yap and Luige A. del Puerto

ABS-CBN YESTERDAY QUESTIONED the credibility of Task Force Ultra and rejected its findings that blamed the organizers of "Wowowee" for the Feb. 4 stampede.

The broadcast giant sought an investigation free of "conflict of interest," saying the task force had members who were "involved in the event"—an apparent reference to the Pasig City government and police.

It also said that instead of coming up with facts, the fact-finding team only delivered what it later admitted to be its personal opinion that ABS-CBN had "exploited, manipulated and treated its viewers like animals."

"If those are what they call facts, then we ... believe there is little hope of getting the truth. Not from Task Force Ultra."

ABS-CBN A4

STILL POOR but alive and well, Steven Prodolano is back home in Laguna with her 10 children.

Feminine face of poverty: Only 3 men died at Ultra

By Volt Contreras and Marlon Ramos
INQ Southern Luzon Bureau

THE OFFICIAL DEATH TOLL IS 74—BUT ADD one more as an unborn child is now dead as a consequence of Saturday's "Wowowee" tragedy.

A pregnant woman among the hundreds who emerged bruised and battered from the stampede at the Philsport Arena, previously Ultra, was forced to have an abortion on Monday night at a government hospital, the hostess learned yesterday.

The woman, 27, was treated for an injured foot when first brought to the Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City and was discharged hours later, according to RMC social worker Elenita Manuya.

She was in pain when brought back to the RMC on Sunday and was allowed to go home again after a checkup. By Monday, though, she returned because of "continuous bleeding" and was finally admitted for an abortion to save her life, Manuya said in an interview.

A resident of Sitio Malag, Cainta, Rizal, the mother of four and wife of a construction worker lost a 4-month-old fetus, Manuya said. The patient was discharged at around 2:30 p.m. yester-

FEMININE B4

Cruel boss shatters Filipino maid's dream

SINGAPORE—CHONA HAD LONG dreamed of this day.

On her parents' small farm in the lush Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon, she had imagined traveling to a place like Hong Kong or Singapore.

And now, in April 2005, she had done it. Here she was in Singapore to begin a new phase of her life, working as a maid.

"I thought Singapore was a very nice place because I could see all the trees and it was very clean ... I'm happy because now my dream has come true, I said to myself," Chona recalls.

But her dream job rapidly turned into a nightmare—one that bears a striking resemblance to the experiences of many other maids documented last year by New York-based Human Rights Watch in a report on Singapore's domestic helpers.

Based on in-depth interviews with 60 maids of various nationalities, the rights watchdog said Singapore's maids suffer abuses including physical and verbal aggression, threats, restrictions on movement, abuse by agents, exorbitant debt payments, long work hours and lack of rest days.

Singapore's Ministry of Manpower called the report a gross exaggeration.

But Chona says she suffered all of it.

Trouble began the moment Chona—not her real name—met her Singaporean agent after being driven into the city from Changi Airport. The contract she had signed with an employment agency in Manila promised a salary of S$390 ($235) and at least two days off every month, she says.

But the Singapore maid agency told her the salary would be S$320 with no days off—for two

CRUEL A4

Fil-Am eyes RP designer for Oscars

By Ruben Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—"SEE THERE ANY FILipino designers out there who would be interested in outfitting me?"

This was the answer of Pia Clemente—the first Filipino-American woman to receive an Oscar nomination in the 78-history of the Academy Awards—when the hostess asked the erstwhile Hollywood awards season question, "Who will you be wearing?"

That is, on the red carpet at the Kodak Theatre on March 5. Clemente added, laughing, "That is the No. 1 question I get asked!"

She revealed, "I will start working with a stylist next week. It would be nice to find a Filipino designer."

FIL-AM A5

ABOUT TIME: Pia Clemente at a press showing in thrilled that her movie "Our Time Is Up" starring Kevin Pollack is nominated for the Oscars in the Best Short Film, Live Action category.

A2 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2006

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Palace, Senate on collision course

By TJ Burgonio

THE CONTROVERSIAL EXECUTIVE Order 464, barring Executive Branch officials from appearing in congressional hearings, has become a source of friction yet again between Malacañang and the Senate.

Invoking the EO, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye and officials of the Department of Interior and Local Government yesterday avoided the hearings on their 2006 budget by the Senate committee of the whole, deftly exercising the initiative who were out to grill them on issues outside of the budget.

The annoyed senators warned that the result means that the Senate would decide on their budgets without hearing their side and might cut their appropriations by as much as P1 billion each.

But senators suspect this is not something that worries the Palace officials.

They believe the officials' refusal to defend their budgets indicated that the administration wanted the 2006 budget measured.

"I have a strong suspicion that they want the 2006 budget measured. And this is not good for the country," said Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the finance committee.

Villar said his suspicion was bolstered by the passage by the House of a P13.1-billion supplemental budget granting government workers a P1,000 monthly allowance.

"Where can you find a situation where the supplemental budget comes first before the main budget? Normally, the supplemental budget is an addition to the main budget. If they want to increase the pay of government employees, they should just pass the budget," he said.

Bunye and Interior Undersecretary Marina Corpus sent letters to Villar, saying they regretted not being able to attend the hearings "for lack of clearance under EO 464."

This is the first time that Palace executives have invoked the order — preventing administration, police and military officials from appearing in congressional hearings without the President's consent — to avoid the budget hearings.

It was previously invoked by officials to avoid the congressional inquiries into the Violeta Court" tape scandal, the P728-million fertilizer fund scam and the controversial Subdibuli project.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Palace lawyers had advised the officials to take this action because the Supreme Court was set to begin oral arguments next week on petitions questioning the EO's legality.

Administration foes, Sen. Soreya said the senate has only exercised the conflict between Malacañang and the Senate over EO 464.

"There's zero hostility between the Executive and the Senate, and as the days go on, that kind of hostility is not shared, it's internal, that's not how good for the government," Arroyo said.

Sen. Manuel Roxas said the move showed a lack of sensitivity on the part of the Executive Branch.

"The budget hearings in the Senate are not driven by party politics but by our own sober response to the call of the times for transparency, public accountability and economic [and political] engagement," he said.

Asked if the officials' absence would jeopardize the passage of the budget, Villar said: "No, maybe a P1 budget."

SHAKEDOWN: Senator Villar shows "secret letters" of retired officials

Cory-Erap alliance doomed, solons say

By Michael Lim Ubac and TJ Burgonio

KEY POLITICAL ALLIES OF President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday downplayed the brewing political alliance between the camps of former President Corazon Aquino and Joseph Estrada, saying it would be short-lived.

Nationalist People's Coalition Rep. Douglas Cagas (Davao del Sur) described it as an "unholy alliance of bad bosses," while Laban-UMD Rep. Edwin Up (Isabela) said it's "doomed to fail."

On Monday, Aquino and key opposition leaders attended the thanksgiving Mass at the San Juan Medical Center for Estrada's successful eye surgery. Later, the two met behind closed doors. Fueling speculations of an emerging alliance between the previously opposing political camps.

It was the first meeting between Aquino and Estrada since the latter was ousted by a military-backed people's revolt in January 2001 where Aquino played a major role.

Cagas said the alliance would be "superficial because both of them cannot possibly accept each other wholeheartedly because of differences in principles and agenda."

Laughing stock

"My opinion will end up a laughing stock if she will join the camp of Estrada whose ouster she actively supported in 2001 because she could not stomach his corrupt leadership," said the lawmaker.

But Aquino has left open the possibility of a political alliance with Estrada to end the current political crisis. "I'm not ruling out anything," she said.

Interesting, Estrada indicated some that he was open to an alliance with Aquino.

Estrada said he Sunday meeting with Aquino, senate Senate and Senate President Franklin Drilon at the San Juan Medical Center was a sign of a "widening alliance" of opposition leaders.

"There pressure was more than reassuring that there will always be a wide alliance in working for the welfare of our people and for the future of our nation," he said in a statement read for him by senator Reagan Estrada.

"Our camp is open to any alliance in working for the welfare of our people," the young Estrada said in a briefing, refusing his father's statement.

Estrada said the Sunday meeting was a "good start" for future meetings, and vowed hopes the two former Presidents would meet again to discuss the framework of alliance as well as solutions to the country's problems.

Good sign

Former Sen. Herme Soto Jr., who is identified with the Estrada camp, said the meeting was a good sign that there was still chance for opposition leaders to be "united."

But Up said an Estrada-Aquino alliance was doomed because its sole objective was to push the political and personal interests of the two presidents.

"They will have no such other interests Estrada is hoping to go back to Malacañang while Cory wants to save their family's business empire," said Cagas who said it was clear that Aquino wanted to install former President Fidel Ramos or Drilon as President so he could preserve her families' wealth.

In view of the upcoming 20th anniversary of the 1986 people's revolt, Estrada said he was joining Aquino's call for "true people to resume and harness the spirit of People Power than to seldom exercise of us. In helping our people help themselves to improve their living conditions."

If there's a will: Nick sends letter to Candy

By Dona Z. Pazolagun

IF THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY, SO THE saying goes, and jailed Marine Cpl. Nicholas Pantaleon proved that yesterday.

He managed to slip a note past his military guards to militant pansiwanna Cpl. Candelaria in Rizal after failing to communicate with her since they were arrested together last Jan. 27, his lawyer said.

The alleged Oakwood mutiny leader asked his lawyers to deliver a handy note, written letter in Rizal after a preliminary investigation hearing held at the headquarters of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"Candy," wrote Pantaleon, addressing the military prosecutor by her nickname. "It is important for us to have a common lawyer. I have decided to ask [Colonel] Mortel [and Antonio] Oposa to be our common lawyer. Ever wanting lawyer can also be one."

He signed the note "Nick."

Mortel and Pantaleon, in handcuffs, hurriedly scribbled the note after Col. Henry Galarpe, the present marshal officer conducting the hearing, left the room. Pantaleon also handed his lawyer's two previously prepared letters — one to his sister and the other, an "open letter" which the lawyers said they would reveal later.

Mortel and Elio said they tried to deliver the letter to Brun at the Headquarters Support Command office where she is now detained. But they were barred from seeing the woman as they passed on the letter to Oposa instead.

Oposa was with Pantaleon when he was captured 44 days after he escaped from military custody. The two are now being investigated by the AFP Provost Marshal's Office for possible court-martial charges.

Military officials said the two had developed an unlikely camaraderie relationship late last year. Both have denied this although Nicholas declared support for Pantaleon's call for reforms in government.

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Yuchengco fights for PLDT shares declared 'ill-gotten'

By Armando N. Nocum

BUSINESSMAN ALFONSO YUCHENGCO IS pursuing his claim to a P22-billion block of shares in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company which the Supreme Court recently declared as "ill-gotten wealth" and forfeited to the Philippine government.

In a motion asking the court to reconsider that ruling, Yuchengco said he should have been given a chance to present evidence before the Sandiganbayan which originally acted on the case.

Yuchengco was involved in a four-way dispute over the contested PLDT shares, which amount to about 6.4 percent of the telephone company's capital stock. The other claimants were the Presidential Commission on Good Government, the family of Ferdinand Marcos, Cojuangco, and the heirs of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Yuchengco charged that the Sandiganbayan had cut on his amended complaint for five years and had deliberately delayed the resolution of related petitions.

He said he had prayed for a postponement of the trial only once while the other parties, including the Cojuangco group and the PCGG asked for postponement several times and were allowed to present additional evidence.

"Given this unusual backdrop of (my) intervention, it is respectfully submitted that supervening court, with grave abuse of discretion, precipitously declared (that I) have waived (my) right to present evidence contrary to the Sandiganbayan Supreme Court's resolving that the desideratum of expeditiously disposition of cases should not, if at all possible, result in the precipitate loss of a party's right to present evidence," Yuchengco said.

The Sandiganbayan had dismissed the PCGG case against Yuchengco and ordered the PLDT shares on grounds they were part of Marcos' ill-gotten wealth. The shares were covered by a complicated web of holding companies, including the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) and Prime Holdings, Inc.

Ruling in 2003 the Supreme Court upheld PCGG's position that the shares rightfully belonged to the government because they were part of Marcos' allegedly ill-gotten wealth as they were acquired by the Cojuangcos acting as dummies for Marcos.

In its 25-page decision penned by Associate Justice Cancio Garcia Morales, the high court said the PCGG should recover those shares for the government. "Any hearing the character of ill-gotten wealth whether they be in the hands of Marcos or those of Cojuangco."

Land feud kills 4 in S. Cotabato

FIGHTING BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND Muslims over land in Mindanao has killed at least four people and forced more than 200 others to flee, officials said yesterday.

The fighting broke out after suspected Muslims fatally shot a Christian couple on Jan. 29 in Polomolok, a village of Tupi, South Cotabato.

Teng Amit and his wife, Norma, were ambushed as they rode a motorcycle, said the province's Army commander Brig. Gen. Alberto Cayton Jr.

Suspected Christian gunmen retaliated on Monday, strafing a house owned by a local commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Moreno was hurt, Caynas said.

On Tuesday, suspected Christian assailants killed a MILF member and his wife, prompting a retaliatory attack hours later by suspected Muslim men who fired shots near the site of the killing, causing no injuries, Caynas said.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalo could not confirm the fatality nor a MILF member, saying only that relatives of MILF members were also killed in the attacks.

Officials have said the two groups have been fighting over land but gave no details.

Caynas said the Army deployed about 60 soldiers and a number of police in the village and that local officials have imposed a curfew.

"They are now monitoring random shots ... any house causing harassment or terrorizing guns," he said, adding that about 240 villagers, fearing for their lives, have abandoned their homes and moved into two nearby schools. AP

PCGG chief told: Follow the law

INSTEAD OF CHALlenging the senators' subpoenas, Presidential Commission on Good Government chair Camilo Sabio should follow the law and resign from the top positions he is occupying in 29 sequestered corporations, Sen. Joker Arroyo said yesterday.

Arroyo said the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officers and Employees, or RA 6713, prohibited Sabio from occupying in these posts while he is PCGG chair.

He also reminded Sabio that the PCGG was under orders from the Supreme Court to disclose to the public any settlement with any person accused of accumulating ill-gotten wealth during the Marcos regime.

P1 budget

Arroyo's statements are the latest in the escalating word war between the PCGG chair and Sabio's predecessor, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita. Ermita—over Sabio's refusal to answer questions concerning a reported compromise deal being worked out with businessman Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. on the P1.28-billion sequestered shares in San Miguel Corp.

The Senate committee under Enrile has scheduled to study the PCGG's proposed budget for 2006 (cut P67 million to P1).

Arroyo said Sabio was misleading the public when he claimed that the PCGG charter allowed him not to answer questions from the senators.

"What provision was incorporated to help the PCGG carry out its work subpoenaed by investigations. It was not designed to give advocate immunity to PCGG for anything they do, for wrong doing," said Arroyo, who helped write the PCGG charter.

He said the commission that Sabio was presiding could not prevail over the supreme bill of Rights provision on the right of the people to information on matters of public concern.

Violated deal

He cited Section 7 of RA 6713 that it would be unlawful for a public official or employee "to commit, manage, or accept employment as an official employee, trustee or nominee in any private enterprise regulated, supervised, or licensed by their office unless expressly allowed by law."

"It's that clear. The 29 sequestered corporations are under the control of PCGG," he said.

Arroyo said Sabio was prohibited from entering into a compromise agreement with the family as an executor of the late Senator Ferdinand Marcos, citing a Supreme Court decision that voided a compromise agreement with the Marcos family in 1993.

Philip C. Tubeza

Police beef up security around Danish, other embassies

THE POLICE BEEFED UP SECURITY at the Danish Embassy and placed a task force in charge of coordinating diplomatic missions on heightened alert yesterday after local Muslims protested caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed that first appeared in a Danish newspaper.

Chief Insp. Wilfredo Garcia said a mobile car was now providing permanent area security to the Danish embassy in Makati City and Philippine National Police Director Mial Querol ordered Task Force Diplomatic Shield placed on heightened alert. The task force is based in Makati where most of the embassies are located.

The security measures were taken a day after some 5,000 Muslims burned the Danish flag during a demonstration in Cotabato City last Tuesday.

Aziz Hanib demonstrations, some of them violent, have been held in various countries in the Middle East by Muslims angered by the publication of the cartoons, one of which depicts the Prophet with a turban in the shape of a bomb. Muslims consider any depiction of the Prophet Mohammed as blasphemous. *Luige A. del Puerto*

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More woes surface for Lafayette in House hearing

From page A1

The finding prompted Sandoval de Castro to say that Mirabelo is prone to the unscrupulous act of falsification of public document, which will pave the way for the total closure of its operations in Rapu-Rapu.

Mariano was one of the four lawmakers who had sought an inquiry into the mass spills last Oct. 11 and 20 that allegedly caused fish kills and damaged the livelihood and health of residents in the provinces of Albay and Sorsogon.

Under questioning by Mirabelo counsel Francis Escudero, Carlos Dominguez, LPI CEO and chair, acknowledged that LPI was 74-percent owned by Lafayette Mining Ltd., an Australian listed company, and that the remaining 26 percent was being held by Philex (initially owned by Lt. Gen. Alfonso and Roner Ina Jr.), a Malaysian corporation.

"This is a direct violation of the 1987 Constitution and the country's national patrimony," Mariano accused.

Holding company

He said "Dominguez's revelation is a strong basis for the immediate cancellation of Lafayette's mining permit and total closure."

Dominguez argued that LPI was only only a "holding company" since the actual mining operations here is being done by two Filipino-based Filipino firms—Gogon Maldonga and Rapu-Rapu Minerals.

Mariano, however, told the witness other than their being a holding that LPI was Rapu-Rapu's mother company.

Asked by the lawyers about details relating to the corporate setup, Dominguez turned in his lawyer Reuben Agabin.

Agabin said the Mining Act of 1995, as explained by the justice department in a legal opinion, allowed a "layer-ing" of ownership.

At the holding company, LPI wholly owns Rapu Rapu Processing Inc., the holder of the mineral processing permit, according to Agabin.

"Under the Mining Act, it [mineral processing plant] can be 100 percent foreign-owned," said the lawyer. "The Department of Justice ruled it as valid."

Sharing agreement

Assistant Environment Secretary Jovencio Ordiales, who was present at the hearing, explained to the committee that the 60-40 sharing—requirement, which prohibits foreigners from owning more than 40 percent of utilities and mining firms, allowed "management consultancy services," known as Mutual Production Sharing Agreements (MPSA).

Dolino said LPI had an MPSA with Gogon Maldonga and Rapu Rapu Minerals on a 60:40 percent ratio. "Management consultancy service is allowed," he said.

In a statement, LPI denied the allegation that Dominguez was forcing or using as dummy for foreign investors.

"Dominguez has only one share in Lafayette Philippines just as he was to be a member of the board. He was elected by shareholders to the board and as an officer of the company and as a professional manager," it said.

Just management control

LPI said the issue was not ownership control, but management control, which was given to him by the majority owners.

It said the processing plant, under the law, could be owned 100 percent by foreigners, so there was no need to hide the owners.

"The mining company [as opposed to the processing company] is owned 60 percent by a Philippine company (Rapu Rapu Holdings Inc.) and 40 percent by Lafayette Phils., which is well within the constitutional limit," LPI said.

Upon a motion by lawmakers, committee chair Leonardo Montemayor asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) not to lift the cease and desist order (CDO) against Rapu Rapu dockings until the company was being investigated.

Fil-Am eyes Filipino designer to dress her for Oscars

From page A1

The Philippine-born Clemente ANONUEVO, an producer and series director, announced, on "One Time It Up," were nominated in the Best Short Films, live-action (an appointed to Animation) category.

In an e-mail interview, Clemente, whose family is from Bulacan, narrated how she learned of the exciting news. Films the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences released the list of nominations on Jan. 31, the wee in the East Coast, visiting family. "Rob called me and said, 'We're in!' I was stunned and overjoyed."

Clemente thanked everyone who prayed for her film to get nominated, as she had asked them earlier to do so via e-mail.

Four years ago, the film-producer joined the Filipino-American film, "The Debut," which starred Eddie Garcia, Tino Cruz, Elsa Raya and Fil-Am actor Dante Basco.

Of her Oscar nod, Clemente—who moved to the United States with her family when she was 3 years old—wondered if she was, indeed the first Fil-Am to be so cited. Just five or ten, she said, "I am proud to be part of history in this way. I take pride in my craft, and I am proud of my heritage."

Whatever means, a 98-Am community leader and publicist who hosted a media conference for Clemente on Tuesday, said that an inquiry sent to the Academy about this detail had "yielded no confirmation since the organization does not take into account the nominees' nationalities or ethnicities."

There are unconfirmed reports that a Fil-Am made had previously been nominated in the Academy's Special Effects Awards category. Even if this is confirmed, Clemente will still be the first Filipino woman to be nominated for an Oscar. In any case, it is a rare honor, and the Filipino American community here is jubilant.

The New Jersey-raised filmmaker has had a taste of an Oscar-win, as a student of Barnard College, Columbia University, Clemente produced "Christmas in New York," which won the 1977 Oscar for Dramatic Student Film.

Near tears

This time around, when at last Clemente saw her name on the Academy's website, she almost cried. "It seemed like something that happened to other people, and here it was happening to me," she recounted.

The other film that made it happen for Clemente stars Bernie Bellack, whose credits include "Gabriel" and "The Dead Emperors," and Jorge Garcia of the current hit TV series, "Lost." It is a film about a therapist who, learning that he has six months to live, adopts a frank approach in his method of treatment—brutal honesty. Clemente said, laughing, "We had such a talented and funny cast."

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Cruel boss shatters . . .

From page A1

years. Despite her surprise, Chona says she was afraid to say anything and felt compelled to agree to or those terms in order to work.

That was the first of many disappointments.

Rather than being taken directly to her employer's house, she says she spent three days "training" at the Singaporean agent's apartment.

Slept like sardines

"They didn't treat us well," says the tiny, dress-haired Chona, 26. Although the apartment had separate bedrooms for the agent, her children, and their grandparents, Chona says she and 15 or 20 other Filipino and Indonesian maids slept in the kitchen.

"We slept like sardines," she says.

The area's among the country's 150,000 maids who work in Singapore—and part of the hundreds of thousands of women from the region who serve as domestic helpers to families in wealthy Asian or Middle Eastern countries.

Chona says she was scolded for not doing the agent's six sleep tightly enough. Another maid was slapped for a similar mistake, she says.

In a perverse way, this was training for what was to come.

'Stupid maid, bloody maid'

After three nights there, the agent took Chona to a Singaporean where her new boss greeted her coldly.

"I want to see if you're hard-working," the woman said, touching Chona's hand. "Then after that she made me take three times in front of my agent," Chona says, her voice straining.

Softly, she adds: "She's very fussy."

Each room had to be cleaned with a white-and-colored cloth. When Chona mistakenly used the orange cloth in the kitchen, the woman became angry.

"Clean again!" she says she was ordered.

The woman, a stay-at-home mother whose husband Chona rarely saw, had two small children: a 5-year-old boy and 15-month-old girl. Chona washed for five youngsters and their parents, washed and ironed the clothes and cleaned the apartment.

She cried, she says, to do her best.

Her days began at 5 a.m. and did not end until 10 hours later at midnight, she says.

A total of purple provides literally color (what black top and black pants that set the another mood for the story she tells while holding a black bag tightly in her lap. Occasionally, Chona wipes tears from her eyes with a brown handkerchief.

"Stupid maid. Bloody maid. You're worse than a little kid. Monkey!" Chona says she was repeatedly told. She was no different, the woman told her, from the eight other maids who had worked for her.

Chona, a Catholic, proved that her employer would treat her differently.

No time for church

Sundays were the only time Chona was allowed out—not for church, but to clean and cook at the home of her boss' mother, she says.

"The first time my employer beat me there."

Chona remembers well that morning in early June last year. She knew I forgot to cook the porridge for the baby."

With so many other duties, she says she rarely managed to get to sleep before midnight, and by 5 a.m. that the porridge should have been made half an hour earlier. Realizing her mistake, she set about cooking.

As didn't matter. Her boss slapped her on the left cheek with a baby bottle filled with hot milk, she alleges.

"I said to her, 'I'm sorry ma'am,' then through she beat me. I said I'm sorry."

The family moved to a bigger condominium, which Chona remembers as round, and glassy. That's where the second beating happened, she says, when she broke a few days after the first, she says.

She beat complained that Chona had not cleaned a wooden counter properly. Then she slammed it into Chona's left breast, it hurt, and left a mark, she alleges.

After nearly two months of abuse and lack of sleep, Chona had had enough.

"Why you beat me?" she confronted the woman.

"Did I beat you?" her boss replied.

"You know what you did, ma'am," Chona said.

The woman said Chona back to the agent but tried to threaten her into silence over what happened.

She returned to the "training" centre where her disappointment began almost as soon as she had arrived nearly two months earlier. AFP

Corrections

IN YESTERDAY'S ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A10 misstated the name of the ABS-CBN chair and CEO. The network's chair and CEO is Eugenio Lopez III—not Eugenio Lopez Jr.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S ISSUE, a story on Page A2/A3 of the Entertainment section—"Fiona found fool to 'jumping' and 'frisky'"—misstated the name of the boyfriend of actress Alesh Bonifo, a Pinoy Big Brother participant. The correct name of Alesh Bonifo's boyfriend is Carlo Morales—not Morales.

Church, gov't team up in fight vs AIDS, finally

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE LOCAL ROMAN CATHOLIC Church and the government are to unveil their first-ever joint campaign against HIV/AIDS next week.

In a bid to overcome their differences, the two institutions will hold a groundbreaking collaboration to fight the country's worsening problem amid HIV/AIDS.

In a forum at the Manila Hotel featuring representatives of both sectors agreed to take the long route of educating the public on sexual abstinence instead of monogamy and fidelity to one's partner within marriage, according to Fr. Anton Pascual, executive director of Caritas Manila.

"We tend to concentrate on condom that unlike us, rather than on abstinence and fidelity to marriage," Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said in a press conference following the meeting arranged by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The collaboration, described by participants as a first in the Philippines, was forged shortly after the release of a study showing that the number of persons with HIV/AIDS in the country had swollen from 6,000 to 2002 to 13,300 last year.

Using the "worldwide" method" endorsed by the UN-AIDS and the World Health Organization, the new study disbanded previous findings that pegged the estimates to a low of 2,000 up to a high of 10,000.

Under the arrangement, the Church and the government would grab other known methods to more aggressively face condoms.

"The Catholic Church's preventive approach is in keeping with its traditional teaching which stresses sexual morality should be restricted to marriage and that couples should be faithful to one another for life," explained Fr. Robert Ballitis, special adviser on HIV/AIDS to Caritas International.

Ballitis said this position was supported by muslim ulamad tagging that the doctrine in islam that was primarily the result of sexual abstinence and fidelity to marriage.

"In many places were governments and other organizations have added these two methods as very effective ways of preventing AIDS," he pointed out.

But the Catholic strategy denounces the government's from scaring up with other measures to prevent the spread of AIDS, he said.

"Perhaps, some governments seem to add to that," he said, without mentioning the reliable form of condom use.

In the past, the government often studied with the Catholic Church for insisting on condom as a major measure to keep the virus at bay.

They were often designated as the dark line of defense, after abstinence and fidelity the critics complained that the government had to controversially peddled the idea of condom use because it was supposedly the easier to sell.

The Church apparently disagrees with condoms even if used only in situations where sexual contact remained unavoidable.

Having agreed on a common strategy against AIDS, the Church and the government were now mapping out specific areas of cooperation centered on advocacy and prevention. The idea was to combine their respective efforts.

Continue reading, on one hand, is concentrating on the education of high-risk groups such as sex-workers, prisoners, homosexuals drug users, and the youth and the gay women.

The Department of Health, on the other hand, has earmarked around P20 million for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, according to Duque.

On top of the budget was the P20 million spent for the purchase of anti-retrovirals last year, he said.

"We can mitigate the risks through adequate education like gone education and by increasing the networks of voluntary counseling centers," he said.

Prober says sorry, but stands by 'animal' remark

By Jeannette I. Andrade
Reporter

MANILA, 6:00 A.M. (UPDATED 1:00 P.M.)—Despite the public outrage over his remark that the victims of the Feb. 4 stampede in Quezon City were "animals," Senate prosecutor Atty. Rico Domingo said he was not sorry for saying it.

"I'm not sorry because that is the truth. I'm not sorry because that is the truth," Domingo told reporters in an interview at the Senate.

Domingo, who is leading the Senate impeachment panel's investigation of the stampede, said he was not sorry for saying it because it was the truth.

"I'm not sorry because that is the truth. I'm not sorry because that is the truth," he said.

Domingo

Pacquiao, SMC sign record-breaking deal

Front page d-1

Representatives of the company declined to reveal the value of the endorsement deal, saying some aspects of the deal have yet to be ironed out.

They admitted, however, that the transaction is "substantial" as it is a "one-of-a-kind deal" and "the biggest for any endorser hired by San Miguel."

Pacquiao's media appearance coincided with an exclusive interview report about the claim of a former girlfriend that Pacquiao is the father of her one, now two-year-old.

Joanna Rose Barrera, 34, yesterday officially filed a suit against Pacquiao for violation of Republic Act No. 9262, which seeks to protect women from violence. She also asked for support for the boy.

But the 27-year-old Pacquiao wanted nothing to do with a questionable relationship that began in 2000 at a local billiard hall.

The former bakery hand who rose to the boxing pinnacle with his spectacular win over Erik Morales of Mexico last month said he only wanted to talk about his boxing and business affairs.

Reward for excellence

"This agreement is in recognition of an excellent athlete who deserves recognition and reward for making our country proud and putting back the Philippines on the world map," said SMC president and chief operating officer Ramon S. Ang.

Under the agreement, signed at the SMC headquarters in Ortigas, the boxing sensation will represent San Miguel as a corporation and endorse its beer products, beer liquors and food products.

Pacquiao will tour the country and the Asia Pacific in the deal which also earned him a title of a "business bandman." He earlier endorsed SMC brands like Purefoods and Ginebra San Miguel.

SMC also announced that it would sponsor Pacquiao's personal business ventures, including concerts, movies and other promotional activities as a singer, actor and performer. This is on top of providing marketing and distribution assistance to Pacquiao's "MP" product line.

SMC also vowed to support Pacquiao's next international boxing matches, aside from providing him the insurance and producing boxing clinic videos.

Over P180-M deal

"Over the long run, this will exceed the P180 million that PEC earned from his endorsements," said unofficial, who requested anonymity.

He said the transaction was a "lifetime partnership" for Pacquiao who would receive regular and royalty payments from the food conglomerate.

Later in the afternoon, Pacquiao attended ceremonies marking him the adopted son of Parañaque at the office of Mayor Wenceslao Bernabe.

A brass band welcomed him. He was gifted with a black dog while a contract award waited for his autograph.

Bernabe said the 4-month-old Labrador named Champ would bring Pacquiao good fortune.

"Since this is the 'year of the Dog, we gave him a dog so that he would be more lucky" said Bernabe.

"Ako'y nagpapasalamat sa dog na binigay ni mayor sa akin ... kasing bait ni mayor, hindi nagpapagat. Si thanks din mayor for the dog.

GMA no ...

Front page d-1

a president who faces serious charges of electoral fraud, betrayal of public trust, corruption, and gross human rights violations, and who has used every means, both fair and foul, to thwart efforts to hold her accountable? That it's OK to lie, cheat, and steal?" asked Antonio Tinio, chair of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

Mr Arroyo is accused of rigging the 2004 presidential election, but she has denied any wrongdoing.

At the Andres Bonifacio Integrated School in Mandaluyong City, the school pupils in speak-straight English and told them a story about how a boy dreamed of riding a magic boat and going to magical places.

Real teachers suffering

Tinio said it was "society's worst nightmare" seeing the President teach a Grade 1 class.

"While Ms Arroyo is happy to play a schoolmaster before the cameras, real public school teachers have suffered greatly under her administration," the ACT chair said.

He said teachers had been impoverished by a four-year salary freeze, heavier teaching loads, and worsening working conditions.

Tinio noted that real public spending on education had fallen by 5 percent since 2001, resulting in record shortage of classrooms, teachers, desks and other resources.

Public school teachers have been calling for a P5,000 across-the-board salary increase, the payment of their unpaid cost of living allowance and a substantial increase in government spending for education.

The Youth Demanding Arroyo's Removal (Youth Dare) said Ms Arroyo, who for a time taught economics at Ateneo de Manila University, should be barred from all educational institutions.

"We do not picketing a school teacher to a classroom. In the thousands of overcrowded and underpaid public school classrooms. Besides, a teacher should be a role model to her students and obviously, the President does not fit the description," said Youth Dare spokesperson Raymund Palatino in a statement. Alexis Romero

Jinkee offers P180,000

"I pity my son because despite the sponsors, wealth and luxurious lifestyle, he is deprived of his son of adequate support," Barrera said.

She said Pacquiao had given her money a few times, including P300,000 before she gave birth to the boy in January 2004, and smaller amounts to the succeeding months.

But after last November, Pacquiao stopped seeing her and sending money, despite her repeated calls, Barrera said.

At a press conference in Quezon City also yesterday, Barrera said Pacquiao's wife Jinkee consented her shortly after Pacquiao celebrated conquest of Morales, and offered her P180,000 to "remain silent and go away." With reports from Jocelyn R. Uy and DJ Yap

The WORLD

Cesar Lawrence B. Gosco

Violent protests vs cartoons escalate

KABUL—AT LEAST TWO MORE AFGHANS were killed and 16 wounded on Wednesday in fresh protests against cartoons depicting Islam's most revered prophet that have enraged Muslims around the world.

Tens of thousands of Muslims have demonstrated in the Middle East, Asia and Africa over the drawings, first published in Denmark. Their Norway and their several other European countries. At least eight people have died in related violence.

Six have died in Afghanistan alone, where protesters have turned their wrath on local authorities after their attempts to target Western interlopers were thwarted.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) head Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana have jointly condemned the widespread violent protests, but also urged respect for religion.

Moderate Muslims, while condemning the cartoons, have expressed fears radicals are hijacking debate over the boundary between media freedom and religious respect.

According "radicals, extremists and fanatics" of denying the views of Muslim world vs "peaceful forward their own agenda," Indian Prime Minister Andrew Fogh Rasmussen on Sunday expressed a call for dialogue with offended Muslims.

"We're facing a growing global crisis that has the potential to escalate beyond the control of governments and other authorities," he said.

In Afghanistan on Wednesday, about 600 protesters gathered in the town of Qalat, in southern Zabul province, and hurled stones at police and torched at least one police vehicle.

When they moved towards a nearby US base in the area, Mastin Mukhlisher, the provincial police chief, said officers were forced to open fire.

"I can confirm that two civilians who were wounded by the shooting, have died now," he said, adding nine other civilians were also wounded.

The 12 cartoonists whose work touched off the firestorm were reportedly to be in hiding, frightened and under police guard, Erica reits, Iran's best-selling newspaper launched a competition to find the best Holocaust cartoon.

The French satirical weekly Charlie-Hebdo on Wednesday reprinted the cartoons, saying it was upholding the democratic right of free expression.

French Muslim organizations had tried to prevent the weekly from publishing the 12 caricatures and depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, but a court rejected their suit on Tuesday on a technicality.

The front page of the magazine carried a new cartoon of the Prophet Mohammad burying his face in his hands and saying.

"It's hard to be loved by fools." Inside pages carried the Danish cartoons and an editorial explaining the decision to reprint them.

Although Muslims across the world felt indignant and enraged by the cartoons, the general reaction of Muslims in the Middle East has been measured and peaceful.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia—seen as the most religiously influential countries throughout the Arab world with large Sunni Muslim populations—have not witnessed violent protests.

Analysts said Syria and Iran, both at loggerheads with the West, used the furore to stir anti-Western violent protests for political means.

After more an Danish mission-aliner in Syria and Lebanon at the weekend, the European Union presidency issued a strong, by worded warning to 15-countries across the Middle East that they were obliged to protect EU missions.

The joint US, OIC and EU announcement, "We believe freedom of the press entails responsibility and discretion, and should respect the beliefs and tenets of all religions. But we also believe the recent violent acts surpass the limits of peaceful protest."

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country governments officials and religious leaders urged calm after Denmark told its expatriate citizens there to leave for their own safety. Reuters

Ang PAGTAAS ng buwis sa Gobyerno ay PAGTAAS ng serbisyo sa Tao.

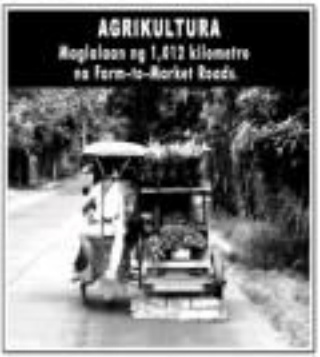
GAMIT NG EVAT

EDUKASYON
Magpapatayo ng 321 gusali o 2,008 silid aralan.

KALUSUGAN
"Insurance Premiums" para sa 3.1 Million "indigents" na walang kakayahang magbayad.

KALIKASAN
Magtatanim ng 9,190 ektarya ng kagubatan upang muling matamnan ng mga puno.

AGRIKULTURA
Magtatayo ng 1,012 kilometro na Farm-to-Market Roads.



Ang paggamit ng VAT para sa mga proyektong pang-masa ay tataas bawa't taon:

30%	35%	40%	45%	50%
2006	2007	2008	2009	2010

A Development Communication Service DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

EARLY SWIM
Babies swim in a special swimming pool at a maternity center in Huangshi, Central China's Hubei Province, Feb. 7. Baby swimming has become very popular after it was reported that hydropathy is conducive to the babies' physical and psychological health. AFP

World's first 9/11 convict released

HAMBURG... THE FIRST PERSON TO BE CONvicted over the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, Moroccan national Mounir El Motassadeq, was released from a German prison Tuesday pending a ruling on an appeal, authorities said.

The justice department in the northern city of Hamburg said that the decision to order Motassadeq held here made on the basis of a federal court ruling upholding a complaint by the 31-year-old Moroccan.

Motassadeq left the prison in the company of his lawyer on Tuesday evening, according to journalists at the scene.

He had been found guilty in August in a retrial of belonging to a terrorist organization for plotting help was with fellow Muslim extremists, including three of the Sept. 11 suicide hijackers in New York and Washington.

He was jailed for seven years but both the prosecution and the defense have appealed the sentence.

His lawyer Gerhard Strate told AFP he filed the suit demanding Motassadeq's release with the federal constitutional court in the southwestern city of Karlsruhe on the grounds that he had been held in custody during the yearlong retrial. AFP

Captain refused to help Egypt ferry

CAIRO—THE CAPTAIN OF A RED SEA FERRY has admitted he steered clear of a drowned ship that sank between Saudi Arabia and Egypt with the loss of almost 1,000 lives to avoid a "second catastrophe."

"I took the decision not to turn around to preserve the lives of the 1,000 passengers on board the Joint Catherine" which was headed for the Israeli port of Safia, Salah Amina told Tuesday's edition of Egyptian government daily Al-Ahram.

As Al-Salam Boccaccio 98, which like the Joint Catherine belonged to the Al-Salam shipping company, sank en route from Duba to the Egyptian port of Safaga last week, after an onboard fire, to one of the worst maritime disasters in living memory.

Amina said turning to aid the stricken vessel could have sunk his own vessel, "especially as the weather conditions were bad and the waves high."

Al-Salam had ordered the Joint Catherine to ask whether the captain could turn back and ensure a rescue effort for the Boccaccio 98, which was carrying 1,400 people when it sank. AFP

US mulls UN resolution on Burma

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States will consider introducing a resolution in the UN Security Council in the step-by-step international pressure on military-ruled Burma (Myanmar) for alleged human rights abuses, the state department said Tuesday.

"We would look at that option very, very carefully and we would look at all UN options, all UN options," Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs Christopher Hill told a congressional hearing after legislators pressed for such a resolution.

Washington put the international spotlight on Burma in December when it successfully pushed the UN Security Council, despite initial objections from China and Russia, to hold a briefing on human rights and other problems in the Southeast Asian state for the first time.

No specified with this, US legislators Tuesday pressed Washington, current president of the UN Security Council, to put Burma formally on the agenda of the powerful 101 panel, a move that could lead to resolutions of condemnation and some pressure on the military leaders.

Hill agreed that the Burma situation warranted continued UN Security Council attention "and we are considering possible steps in that body."

On the prospects of a Security Council resolution, he said, "it is not very strong, but it is not impossible." He noted that there is quite a broad number of players and the Security Council is an appropriate place to be informed and to look very closely what the next step is."

The Secretary of State said Bush wants "has designated 2006 as the year for bringing about a transition to democracy" in Burma "and we take the target very seriously." Barry Lowenkron, the Assistant Secretary of State for democracy and human rights, said in his testimony.

Burma's military junta has been accused of operating a strict police state and restricting basic rights and freedoms.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's democracy icon and Nobel peace prize winner has been under house arrest for more than 10 of the past 16 years and kept isolated from the outside world.

The party won the 1990 elections in a landslide but was never allowed to govern.

US legislators said a UN Security Council resolution on Burma should call for, among other things, the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi, a timeline for compliance and punitive sanctions if the military junta failed to comply.

The resolution must be framed "in the strongest possible terms," said Republican Rep. Chris Smith, who chaired the hearing.

But any UN move to hand Burma to the UN Security Council could face opposition from permanent council members Russia and China as well as Malaysia, which is playing a central Southeast Asian role to good theatre in its embarking on reforms. AFP

'LOST WORLD'
This undated handout photo released February 2006 from Conservation International shows an unidentified researcher holding the rare species of "Dendrotrogus pulcherrimus," discovered from the Foja mountains in Papua, Indonesia. —

Yemen hunts Qaida fugitives

SANAA—YEMEN HAS LAUNCHED an intensive search in the capital and other parts of the country to try to recapture a group of at least 13 convicted al-Qaida members who fled from prison last week, an official said on Tuesday.

Dozens of the fugitives' relatives and friends have been detained for questioning, said the official, who did not wish to be identified.

The official said the main search effort was in the Abyan province to the south, but also the capital Sanaa as well as provinces.

On Sunday, the helicopter joined a global terrorism alert over the escape of the militants who tunnelled their way out of a jail in Sanaa, calling them a "danger to all countries."

The 13 militants were among 23 inmates who escaped in a major embarrassment for Yemen, which has worked closely on militants in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States.

They included Jamal Badawi, mastermind of the bombing of the US destroyer Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden in October 2000, which killed 17 US sailors. He was originally sentenced to death, but this was later commuted to 15 years in prison. dpa

Round-the-world solo flight delayed

MIAMI—US MILLIONAIRE ADVENTURER Steve Fossett is set to take off Wednesday on his quest to break a record for a round-the-world solo flight one day after postponing a planned takeoff due to strong winds, organizers said.

Fossett will try to take off in his Virgin Atlantic GlobalFlyer around from the Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday between 6:00 a.m. and 7 a.m., a spokesperson for Fossett's mission control, Suzanne Sibbitts, told AFP.

The flight was postponed Tuesday due to strong winds and a forecast, stormier storm could.

"The fuel tank is fixed and we believe the weather will be good and it is acceptable," added Fossett, 61, "I hope to be flying in the morning."

The weather at Cape Canaveral, Florida, had been problematic even late Monday, with organizers initially saying the forecast for Tuesday was "marginal, but sustainable" for launch.

Jon Ambers, in charge of the airplane's fueling, said the fuel tank was due to an unusual new part that did not seal properly.

Fuel loss is something that worried Fossett's team during his first record setting flight around the world completed in March 2005, Fossett reached his final destination in Salina, Kansas, with less fuel than anticipated.

In planned, Fossett's record afternoon would take him 41,379 km in approximately 80 hours, 1,126 km further than the 1999 around-the-world balloon trip by Brian Jones, a British, and his Swiss partner Bertrand Piccard in the Breitling Orbiter III.

That would also beat the distance record set by Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager in their nine-day, non-stop trip around the world without refueling aboard the Voyager aircraft in 1986. That trip logged a total of 40,212 km. AFP

US teen convicted of killing his family

ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO—JURORS convicted a 16-year-old boy in the shooting deaths of his family on newsman but Sunday's verdict despite defense attorney's claims that the teen was abused by his parents.

Cody Posey was convicted of murder in the deaths of his stepmother and stepsister and voluntary manslaughter in the death of his father, who worked as foreman on Donaldson's ranch in southern New Mexico.

Posey also was convicted of four counts of evidence tampering. He hung his head and wept as the verdicts were read.

Posey could face life in prison on the first-degree murder charge in the death of his step-mom. State District Judge Waylon Counts said a sentencing hearing would be scheduled within 30 days.

The teen was arrested a few days after the bodies of his father and stepmother, Neil and Tyanne Posey, and his 13-year-old stepsister, Mary Lee Edmund, were found hidden in a remote pile on Donaldson's Horse Canyon Ranch in July 2004.

Donaldson was the child's first witness, taking the stand Jan. 17 to describe finding a bloody scene upon returning from a trip.

The jury, which heard three weeks of testimony, began deliberating Monday.

Stefan Posey, brother of Neil Posey, told reporters outside the courthouse he was pleased with the verdict but disappointed the jury was not convicted of first-degree murder in his brother's death. AP

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BRITISH COUNCIL Philippines

Four presidents and a raucous funeral

ATLANTA, GA. — MOURNERS GATHERED ON the premises of US President George W. Bush to attack his politics on Tuesday at the funeral of Coretta Scott King, the first lady of the US civil-rights movement.

Jimmy Carter, one of four presidents to speak, took a jab at Bush's domestic surveillance program during his litany of memories, speeches and song for the late widow of Nobel peace laureate Martin Luther King Jr., assassinated in 1968.

The 10,000 mourners also heard Ohio Rep. Joseph Lowery, a civil-rights leader, cite Mrs. King's legacy as a champion of racial equality while lamenting battle at Bush administration policies over Iraq and Swahili.

Mrs. King, 78, died on Jan. 30 of complications from ovarian cancer. Her funeral is a Baptist church in Lithonia, Georgia, drew a "who's who" of the political and entertainment worlds and the US civil rights community.

She was due to be buried alongside her husband at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change she founded six weeks Monday.

US PRESIDENT George W Bush (from left), former US President Bill Clinton, US Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and former President George H.W. Bush attend the memorial service. AP

With Washington debating the legality of Bush's domestic eavesdropping on Americans suspected of ties to al-Qaida, Carter drew spirited applause with comments on federal efforts to spy on the Kings decades ago.

"It was difficult for them personally with the civil liberties of both husband and wife violated, and they became the targets of secret government wiretapping and other surveillance," Carter said.

Former President Bill Clinton, a favorite among mainstream civil rights leaders, offered rousing hints of the possible presidential candidacy of his wife, New York Democratic Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who stood smiling at his side.

"I'm honored to be here with my predecessor and my former presidents and ..." he trailed off, mentioning in his wife's direction to loud and sustained applause.

Speaking first, ahead of his critics, Bush said: "For some today is after the sympathy of our entire nation at the passing of a woman who touched souls in our nation when she

"Hearing, friend a leader she became a leader. And when she spoke Americans listened closely because her voice carried the wisdom and goodness of a life well lived," he said.

Lowery, former head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which Martin Luther King helped found in 1957, gave a playful reading of a poem in eulogy of Mrs. King and made a home-run-ended reference to the Iraq war launched by Bush.

"We know now there were no weapons of mass destruction over Zhow-Hui Coretta Scott King and we know that there are weapons of misdirection right down here Millions without health insurance. Poverty abounds. For war billions more but no more for the poor," Lowery said.

The memorial evoked a mix of standing ovations. Bush's immediate reaction could not be seen on television, but after Lowery finished speaking, the president—who sat behind the speaker—shook his hand and laughed.

Bush's father George Bush, the fourth president at the funeral, broke any tension by recalling his own meetings as president with Lowery and gave a cheery "Lowery 21... Bush 1, it wasn't a fair fight."

The service, billed as a celebration of Mrs. King's life, featured performances by Stevie Wonder and Gladys Knight.

Musicians joined a choir in singing some of King's favorite gospel songs, among them "Amazing Grace."

Mrs. King's daughter Bernice, a minister, gave the eulogy saying of her mother: "She was not just a national figure, she was a global leader."

Born April 27, 1927, near Marion, Alabama, Coretta Scott King played a back-up role in the civil rights movement until her husband, a Baptist minister, was gunned down in Memorial on April 4, 1968. Reuters

Antiterror chief of CIA quits

WASHINGTON...THE head of the CIA counterterrorism center has been forced to step down as part of efforts by the spy agency to bolster its pursuit of al-Qaida, current and former intelligence officials said on Tuesday.

Robert Grenier, 51, told colleagues in an e-mail on Monday that he had been asked to move on from the helm of the unit that plans and executes CIA counterterrorism operations and provides analysis to policymakers.

It was not clear whether Grenier planned to leave the spy agency and there was no immediate word on who would succeed him in the counterterrorism post.

The CIA has been criticized for failing to track down al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and his second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who are believed to be somewhere along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.

A failed CIA attempt to eliminate Zawahiri with a missile strike last month in Pakistan was widely denounced in Islamabad and set off anti-American protests across the country after 18 civilians, including women and children, died in the attack. Reuters

Muslim cleric who incited murder jailed

LONDON...THE British Muslim cleric whose London mosque was at the center of some of the most inspirational recruiting years of the last decade was sentenced to seven years in jail on Tuesday for inciting murder of Jews and unbelievers.

Egyptian-born Abu Hamza al-Masri, 47, preached at the Finsbury Park mosque where convicted shoebomber Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui was shopped.

"He was directly and deliberately stirring up hate of against Jewish people and encouraging murder of those he referred to as ... motherfuckers," British Crown Prosecutor Jeremy Lewis said.

"Not only did he repeatedly advocate the Muslims should kill motherfuckers, he also encouraged his listeners that it was part of their religious duty to do so," it said. Reuters

2nd International
Health and Hygiene Symposium
Better Health and Hygiene: Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Hopes

HEALTH AND HYGIENE CHALLENGE: FAST-TRACKING PROMOTION

The importance of promoting health and hygiene as development intervention will be the main focus of discussion as some 150 health and hygiene professionals from seven countries meet in Manila from February 9-10, 2006 for the 2nd International Health and Hygiene Symposium.

The symposium theme "Better Health and Hygiene: Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Hopes" makes strong reference to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals which include sanitation and hygiene in the Plan of Implementation, and the global community's acknowledgement of the importance of health and hygiene promotion as development intervention.

Hosted by Procter & Gamble Distributing Philippines, Inc. (P&G), through its flagship brand Safeguard, the symposium, which is a follow-through to the first one held in Beijing, China last July 2002, then hosted by the Safeguard Research Institute of Family Health and the China Ministry of Health, will be attended by key scientific and government thought leaders from China, Russia, Pakistan, Mexico, Singapore, USA and host country, the Philippines.

Philippine Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III is expected to address the global challenge of health and hygiene promotion, education and intervention to improve the health, well-being and economic productivity of the population.

The two-day symposium's objectives are 1) to share scientific data and knowledge on the importance and effectiveness of good hygiene practices in preventing and controlling diseases; and 2) to exchange hygiene education and intervention program experience among participating countries, especially where public and private sector collaboration are concerned.

Hosting this important international gathering is made more significant for Safeguard as it celebrates its 40th year in the Philippines. Safeguard added a new dimension to health and hygiene when it was introduced to Filipino families in 1966. It has become a Philippine institution in hygiene promotion and education having successfully partnered with PNRET, UNICEF and DOH, among others, for school and community hygiene intervention.

Aside from providing a strong communication platform with health and hygiene experts from developed and developing countries, the symposium also raises awareness of the importance of basic personal hygiene such as proper hand washing and bathing. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that nearly 40% of the world's population (2.4 billion) have no access to hygienic means of personal sanitation resulting in the deaths of millions of people, including children, from various diseases caused by inadequate sanitation.

WHO believes that increasing access to sanitation and improving hygienic behavior are key to reducing this burden of disease.

Symposium participants are expected to develop proposed action plans for governments, non-government organizations, the scientific community and private sector to commit to reducing the main risky hygiene practices and conditions among people especially in developing countries and turning this commitment into reality.

40 YEARS OF SAFEGUARD: Sustainability In Action

The concept of sustainable development as a way to ensure better quality of life for everyone is an effort that businesses, government and non-government organizations are increasingly embracing. While many have their own ideas about sustainable development or what a better quality of life means, Procter & Gamble (P&G) has taken it as an opportunity to responsibly leverage its products and innovations for the benefit of everyone.

P&G

From the beginning, P&G's embrace of sustainable development has been based on the company's vision that it can grow business by bringing to the marketplace innovations and technologies that touch the lives and improve the quality of life of consumers. It is this vision that brought Safeguard to the Philippines. Its introduction to the country in 1966 added a new dimension to family health and hygiene among Filipino consumers. It brought to life the "konsensya" of Filipino mothers and sparked consciousness for better family hygiene. Today, Safeguard continues to be the nation's health partner and an institution in health and hygiene promotion.

P&G has chosen to focus on health and hygiene as part of its sustainability effort because it has a significant impact on its consumers. For 40 years, Safeguard, P&G's flagship brand, has been at the forefront in health and hygiene promotion in the country.

Safeguard's health and hygiene promotion efforts stem from the fact that while the provision of sanitation and hygiene facilities is vital to improving health and hygiene in families, schools and communities, it does not necessarily mean that people use them effectively. It does not ensure that the prevalence of infectious diseases automatically decreases.

Safeguard

People need to be made aware of proper hygiene practices.

In a message launching a nationwide educational roadshow to promote hygiene in 2002, Johnjo Cua, P&G Philippines president and general manager, said "We at Procter & Gamble, through Safeguard, have made the promotion of good hygiene habits among Filipinos a priority. Safeguard's mission is to help a healthier nation. We have been single-minded in our educational message: Practicing proper hygiene habits, with soap that provides superior protection against germs, helps families stay healthy."

In 1997, P&G, UNICEF and five other agencies, namely the Philippine Association of Medical Technologists (PAMET), the Department of Education and Culture, the Department of Health, the Philippine Hospital Association and PEP, the national association of broadcasters, formed an alliance to undertake a National Health and Hygiene Program under a project called Kalinisan, Kalusugan, Kaunlaran (KKK). The project aims to reduce the incidence of hygiene-related diseases through proper hygiene education in schools and communities. The program highlights the importance and practice of the Three Steps to Good Health (hand washing, bathing and keeping the surroundings clean) which is recognized as the simplest yet most cost-effective way to prevent diseases.

Today, Safeguard continues to create a strong bond with Filipino consumers, touching and improving their lives through partnership programs like Alagang Safeguard, Alagang Nanay for the family, Safeguard-UNICEF Handog ng Safeguard Mediko-ng Kinabukasan Scholarship Program for the youth, among others.

As it celebrates its 40th year of health and hygiene promotion in the country, Safeguard, together with the KKK organizations composed of PAMET, the Philippine Hospital Association and the National Confederation of Barangay Health Workers, is hosting the 2nd International Health and Hygiene Symposium. To celebrate its 40th year together with Filipino families, Safeguard brings back the KKK Program and once again, brings attention to the basic household hygiene practices of hand washing and bathing through families' hygiene education programs in schools and barangays. Hand washing and bathing are recognized as simple, cost-effective ways to protect the family.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vol. 21 No. 83

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Too hot to handle?

THIS WE'VE GOT TO SEE. THE OFFICE OF THE Ombudsman has formed a 10-member task force to investigate the P728-million fertilizer scam and Acting Assistant Ombudsman Evelyn Ballicud vowed that they would follow the paper trail wherever it may lead. If the trail leads to Malacañang and there is strong evidence linking President Macapagal-Arroyo to the scandal, then the task force will recommend the filing of an impeachment complaint against Sec. Ballicud said.

That's as bold and clear as any declaration of intent can be. But until the task force actually files the charges (or makes the recommendation for her impeachment, in the case of the President), nobody should bet on the prosecutors' getting anywhere with the case.

From the start, the Ombudsman apparently wasn't all too eager to reach this hot potato. It had to be shaken up and pushed by Senate President Franklin Drilon, among others, before it could bring itself to act on the case.

As early as June 2004, a farmers' organization had already filed a plunder case against the President and several officials of the Department of Agriculture. That case has since been gathering dust in the archives of the Ombudsman.

The scandal was brought back to the limelight in September last year by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. The Senate began its investigation about 10 days later and has since held six curiously televised hearings. In between those hearing, there have been many widely publicized reports related to the case, especially about the mysterious trustees and goings (mostly the latter) of Jocelyn Enriquez, the former agriculture undersecretary who administered the funds and who has refused to honor the Senate's summons for her to testify on the case.

And yet it's only now that the Ombudsman has bestirred itself to give the case some serious consideration, but the agency rushed not only to look into complaints filed by others but also to investigate cases on its own initiative!

A lot of upside seems has already been done by the Senate committee on food and agriculture headed by Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. The committee members have been able to ferret out some very damning information that the Ombudsman would find useful if it is really serious about pursuing the case. The committee has the names of the officials who handled the funds and the recipients, as well as Commission on Audit reports showing that the fertilizer was overpriced by 680 percent to 1,200 percent. There are witnesses who have come forward to corroborate the documentary evidence or some those who benefited from the scam and those who were responsible for it. All the Ombudsman has to do is to gather everything and, maybe, follow up some leads, and she may yet see the biggest number of rogues being sent to jail, if not to the death chamber, in a single case.

But it is not just the big number of those involved that makes this case possibly the biggest challenge the Ombudsman will ever face. It is also the personalities involved. Aside from a handful of agriculture officials who disbursed the money there is a long list of recipients, including 185 members of the House of Representatives, 46 governors and 24 mayors, who may have dipped their dirty fingers into the kitty. Most are holding office and most are supporters of the President. How far will the task force go before they begin asking the President to do all she can to head off the heat?

And then there is the President, whom the opposition has tagged as the ultimate political beneficiary of the scam. The opposition believes the hundreds of millions of pesos that were not used to buy fertilizers were spent to buy the support of the lawmakers and local officials.

The fertilizer scam is a test case for the Ombudsman and especially its new head Merceditas Gutierrez. Administration critics have always doubted her capacity or stand up to pressure from the Palace, given her closeness to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo. Her immediate predecessor, the well-respected Simeon Marcelo, disbelieved to have cut short his tenure in the ombudsman agency not only because he was sick physically but also because he was sick of the meddling of people close to the President, particularly Mr. Arroyo. The President's husband was Gutierrez's law school classmate and is reputed to have boosted her career in government. Can she go against the interests of her old college friend as well as the President who has appointed her to several key positions?

It should not take very long before the public gets to know the answer.

Mirror on the wall

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

POLITICAL SPINMASTERS WERE BY A crystal ocular. "Headline deaths," they noted. "Not our headline crimes." Thus Monkey cited forgotten—like the Ultra stampede that killed 74, maimed over half a thousand and crammed a morgue.

The stampeding of truth is dutifully proper instead in the past. The higher the body count, spinmasters matter, the easier to black out scandals elsewhere.

The stampede at Ultra resulted in asphyxiated, trampled-on bodies, mainly of elderly women and children. "After others had fallen and were trampled over, others walked over the corpses to regain where traffic tickets could be had," columnist Alex Magno noted. "Has this a culture undergone?

Killed as we capers at practicing virtue from a distance," Inom Inamo university president Theodoro Shabosty writes. In gated enclaves and less affluent places, many cringed from the mirror Ultra threw into their faces. Did we see those sixty collected images? How could look into the face of a deprived, deluded and—some insist—depraved society. "Silence, mirror on the wall," the old nursery theme ran.

There were preventable deaths. That's dent from the report submitted by the fact-finding "Ultra Task Force" led by local Government Undersecretary for Public Safety Marius Corpus. Among other things, it found lapses in securing lack of contingency plans, etc. It linked three 4000-CBM officials to those failures. Their names were withheld, pending review by the justice department.

Some comments were exciting: "Offering a few tickets to economy people can't be likened to throwing a small piece of meat to a pack of hungry wolves, and they trapped the dumb people." Unedited list, says SEE CBM television network, which is on his and non-profit.

"I hold myself accountable should our license to operate be threatened in the future," Chairman Bolgarcos Lopez III declared. But "nothing people who attended" is not one of the seven-digit Rows, he famously stressed.

The last thing we need now is petty bickering. Malacañang stressed that the probe would not payback against the Lopez network's giant ABS-CBN which has been critical of the administration," Inocencio reports. And the local commission prudently issued a knee-jerk reaction: It's all the President's fault. Indeed "The failure to act immediately on those who have committed crimes."

Mall management are now hurriedly reviewing their crowd management manuals. Local governments are updating disaster laws, etc. But Ultra teased up issues beyond flawed drills to uncover legal sanctions anchored on outdated laws.

There are broader concerns. Sociologist Michael Tan pinpoints Filipino cultural traits working with big widespread poverty "have impudent mass dumping ground on elderly women to pumping guns—a trait indulged in equally by the rich. Indeed, the "essence of humanity is the tendency to make an exception of ourselves."

Columnist Manuel Quezon brought to the harrison overloaded studios an event safety Magsio observes the "system" needed to tolerate, spurned on by peddlers of shampoos and skin whiteners.

Media must ask the hard questions of itself. Do most advertising, which is on linked to the delivery of ratings and bottom lines. "Television is the first culture available to everyone and entirely governed by what people want," Clive James once wrote, "and the terrifying thing is what people do want."

Do we just pander to what people will for? Hardly. Are we opinionators the sole arbiters of taste for information, cynical, comment for hard reporting? The press is "the subordinate arm of the people," we say. But in pursuit of circulation and ratings, do we warp that task and settle for the role of entertainers? Or is the new trade's lesser jargon. "Ulli's or Gawa Infotainer Officers"?

What are the consequences of that sway in an impoverished country? Do we fund people, or defend with more than no bounty, to the poor books, or games, inspiring? Or do we (nevertheless) duty to help the poor? Has media become, with the ad industry, an epitaxy peddler?

"Broadcasters are an agent in the business of pumping a signal into the air to into a cable line serving customers, not in the business of delivering media," the legislator Adam Clayton Powell pointed out.

What lessons will media and advertising draw from this disaster? Reforms must be adopted, because don't the right thing to do, but because we're leery of danger themselves outside.

The reports, meanwhile, drown the spinmasters' usual work. Headline deaths blotted out equally critical issues from coup plotters, the Oakwood mutiny to the Senate's Mike refusal, to the fertilizer mess and the looming "campaign suite agreement" on the senate levy fund.

Before Ultra, the Senate subdued drama: the Presidential Commission on Good Government's budget from P67 million to one peso. Senator PCGG chair Camilo Sabio refused to provide details on a "compromise agreement" on the sentences were levy fair.

Yet, the Ultra deaths are a fraction of the thousands sent to premature graves, or beggared, by the levy fund. The unspoken strangled Labor's complaint that Senators Juan Ponce Enrile, Franklin Drilon and Rolando Angara helped craft the exemptions were levy intervene—and, therefore, they have no moral right to sit in judgement.

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"I worked hard to become switchblade for a Claro Recto, Jose Diokno or Lorenzo Tañada to peddle their legal skills for such a measure," the Iron Star said three years back. That time for exercising.

Not in 20 minutes up to the minute on the wall. Because those who made Ultra inevitable partake as our "leaders." Indeed, "the greatest sin is for with honor is discarded," as Socrates reminded. "it is to be what we pretend to be."

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

But for the grace of Edsa

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED?

In past years, GMA has exerted herself to give a bit of fanfare to the celebrations of the two Edsas, the one coming on the heels of the other. Edsa II especially, where she last took virtually the reins of power and where she, as the inheritor, if not its author, first Edsa I on the table to show some gratefulness to Cory and Cardinal Sin without whom she would never have come to power. But this year, nothing. For reasons that are not hard to understand. It doesn't do to trumpet the virtues of ending a tyranny by means of popular revolt, when the thing stands to be repeated in all to buy against you.

Edsa II came and went, and GMA remained only the virtues of Peoples. Edsa I is about to come and GMA is transporting only the virtues of sending perhaps unknown by means of the PAF. Or at least she did so, until the stampede at Ultra came along to show exactly in what state the people have been tenderhearts.

But I digress. I know how far anyone can put a dampener on Edsa I. This end of the month is its 20th anniversary, however there is sufficient to be important to prick the attention of the world. I know that EDSA for one has made a to the documentary of the significance of the event. I was one of their interviewees. Ish had a long conversation about the power of myth in this country, and the mythical themes of good and evil in particular in the two Edsas. But I leave that for the moment. My point simply is that, whether government wants it or not, the 20th anniversary of Edsa is bound to be a festive event. Who knows? Probably in more ways than one.

Looking back, what lessons does Edsa still have to teach us?

One strange sentiment, but which I've heard even from friends who've gotten littles and frustrated over the years, is that they're tired of Edsa, Edsa is useless. Some even say they are sorry to have participated in both Edsas. The two Edsas, they say, merely ushered in regimes that proved to be as bad, if not worse, than the tyrannies they replaced.

I can understand the bitterness, but I do not share it. The one lesson the two Edsas have illustrated time and time again is that we are not powerless. We are human beings, we are not gods. We cannot know the future. We can only act according to how we see things today and how we reckon our actions will affect tomorrow. We can only act with our hearts and minds, we can only act with our conscience. That is good enough. We know that sticking tyranny is the most best thing to committing slow motion suicide. We are compelled by all that we hold dear to end it. The Petrobetted Bushbots waged war not useless even if it merely ended in American rule—indeed even if he perished in in Iraq. The true liberation is the patrollies fought during the Japanese Occupation was not useless even if it merely restored American rule. It remains a lessons in the darkness in this day and happens even if human did fall. If I have to go through another Edsa to stop the bleeding of this country today, I would do so without a second thought. I would welcome it.

There is a corollary to this however, which is the more important lesson: We are not gods, but we are not fools either. Or shouldn't be. What happens after Edsa is within our power to influence. What is what we have now. As for the rest of every Edsa, we are not here passing ourselves in the back, singing songs about our deeds and anxious to go back to our old lives—like veterans of a future campaign to their families—to wait to do something about it. What happens after is ours. We are meant to keep the spirit to those who would take them, or claim them by right of heroism, and at least until things get so bad we are compelled to rise to end them all over again. We are not gods but, alas, we are fools.

I remember distinctly that someone wrote me shortly after Edsa I begging me, "no EDSA mine click." She said OBR had put paper in power, we could all do with ending dictatorship and democracy. She was not merely wanted to power and deserved a "honeymoon period." I knew when I hear the words "unity" and "reconciliation" that we are headed for trouble. Those become virtually allergic to them.

I wrote back to say politely that I disagreed with their take. At the very least, I said, I could eat sit back and relax when the person who had come to power was someone who, unlike Cory, had distinguished herself by appointing only when the smoke had cleared, and whose inauguration speech singled out the wrong people to thank—chiefly the generals who remained on the 15th hours and her cohort of friends, instead of the 1000s, the students, the religious, and the media who first took up the sailgate against Erap. Someone like that did not deserve to be honeymooned, she deserved to be watched. And watched very closely.

At the very most, I said, whatever stuff my beneficiary of Edsa was made of, the point was not to know them well enough alone, the point was to bring People Power to bear on what they did afterward. People Power wasn't just there to destroy, it was there to build. Cory was there to destroy and build. But looks what she did when left well enough alone. Edsa wasn't the end of things, it was the beginning of things. The task of Edsa did not end with the ending of a nightmare, it began with the building of a dream. The point was not to cut the branches of Edsa some day, the point was to make sure they did not shelter and build an altar only to themselves.

So, I have not gotten used of Edsa, I have not gotten cynical about Edsa. It's not so much that I believe in having as many Edsas as it takes to change this country, it's that I believe in having an Edsa that will make another Edsa superfluous. Why be tired or cynical about Edsa?

Edsa didn't fail us, we failed Edsa.

On the Cabinet appointments

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LAST SATURDAY MORNING, MY HUSBAND and I were one of Mercy Manila with Edmund Lopito, who works with a government-owned corporation and sometimes drives for our family on weekends to earn extra bucks, at about 6 a.m., we heard the news about the Ultra stampede. Edmund turned pale. An early-that morning, at 4 a.m. to be specific, his mother and brother were both in their line. So, had gone to Ultra for the "Wowowee" celebration, hoping to win some prizes. He immediately tried getting in touch with the two women through their cellphones, but he got no answer. Neither could he contact his wife and children. Frantic, he decided to let Edmund take the vehicle and return to Manila to be could look for them.

Edmund went to various hospitals and funeral parlors, but to no avail. The anxiety growing by the hour, he decided to go home to see if phones of the two, thinking they'd come in handy to his search. He found them there, quite shaken but unharmed.

* * *

That drama was repeated in thousands of families last Saturday, and now comes the finding of the finger-pointing: "Ultra look-boss," "Operawowee" did not help its judgment that MIG-GMA "treated [the fans] like animals." No one would dare disagree with those labels, but all the same I must say that what caused the denial is that ABS-CBN was guilty of complacency and of poor planning and coordination. Last Saturday's stampede was a tragedy waiting to happen.

* * *

I must that the government will deal with the network justly. But what ought to be stressed now are the valuable lessons to be learned so that the same tragedy will not happen again. For instance, in all stadiums in the country, the number of persons allowed before the until spin out of control is set. My friend gave back to the dispersal a few months ago of street protesters to Mendiola by the police using water cannons. The police were mindful of the danger of the fall of people in the stampede. As MCB Police Director Vidal Querol explained to me then, right was falling and there was no telling how system pressurize would be the use.

* * *

Then there was the matter of the ambulances and of darkness in new violence. Thank God, the demonstrators only got wet and not bullets in their bodies, like they were in the bloodless massacre on February 1987. Recall, too, how the communist-led between the rightists and however at Hacienda Luisita spun out of control two years ago, until intense provocation from the leftists, leaving seven people dead.

As we still see in the Ultra incident, there's a real need for those in authority to understand the dynamics of handling huge crowds. Saturday's episode has also provided a lot of soul-searching within the giant network, having those now mentally-scarred during that in "Wowowee" host Willie Revillame.

* * *

The business editorial referred to the recent Cabinet appointments as a form of political "payback." But it also said that **President Arroyo does to overrule into her Cabinet those people she is considerable odds and deeply trusts.** And all presidents get this some those people after the latter have rendered long service. In the case of Presidential Rizalegal-Arroyo, she proved to appoint people who can be trusted because more severe after her unfortunate experience with the Hyatt 10. To my mind, however, what constitutes "payback" is when the appointees do not deserve the appointment at all, but get rewarded only because they defended her or did an "operation" for her.

For instance, now Pobre legal counsel Idamelo Bautista, a longtime law professor, certainly can be put in this category as he has many enlightened legal minds around. He can easily qualify for a Supreme Court seat. On the other hand, Sec. Romulo Puno is a controversial appointment who has little positive value for GMA. Puno a reputation for loudmouth spewing going back to the two previous administrations, he falls under the category of "non-resident opposition," as Atty. Archie Aquino termed it and which the bishops insist GMA ought to resist. Also, Secretary Angelo Reyes performed creditably as the DILG. Why transfer him to a less fruitful sphere he would be "scapegoat hole in a round peg"? Not only that, he would have again to go through the Commission on Appointments wringer through which he barely squeezed before? Sec. Mirian Defensor-Santiago would be a better fit for the Justice portfolio in the alleged fight fraud operation that the drama dictated her of the presidency in 1992. Why give her the chance to stir trouble, when Reyes wasn't doing badly? What's so special about Puno?

As for Sec. Salvador Enrilaya at the helm of the DSWD, there's no doubt he'd do very well as he knows that territory very well. The fear that he would veer in to pressure from his friend outside there is unfounded. Why say that? In that his appointment would be deprived of representation. I have consistently observed to the staff of Congress by the Executive because it's not fair to the lawmakers' constituents.

* * *

Then Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to speak his mind. In choosing Sec. Manuel Villar recently hinted a dinner for his daughter who resigned as Interpeace. Among the guests were Gonzalez and Sec. Avelino Cruz. Before Congressman, the term UNCP penalties, whose political future had just come out the week before. In his remarks, Gonzalez asked Lagdameo to campaign that all the versions of the "Cuneo Jacot" be deposited with the UNCP which Lagdameo is the head. Only then, he said, can the nation put to rest the issue of whether GMA cheated or not. Lagdameo said the Church has no such expertise. But Gonzalez insisted, "We're not asking for your expertise. We only want you to be the depository of all the tapes, so that suspect help can be secured to authenticate them, in the interest of truth." He didn't get a favorable reply.

My colorful lab life

I AM AT MY WITS' END. IT IS LESS THAN THREE MONTHS before my final paper is due, two months before my defense and three months before my scheduled graduation. And to make matters more nerve-racking, I am still to be progressive phase of my experimentation.

I have not anticipated that a rainfall of calamities and my research would decide to a landfall when it did. After three months of herding large of palmisti and being the object of ridicule from parents for my "unusual" interest, but why does the supply of amulets, rocks and gas have to run out now of all times?

YOUNG BLOOD

Bernadette Rhodes S. Cleofed

My entire laboratory life, which consists of more than 20 mice, has been permeated by unprecedented administrations and circumstances because the materials we need are sporadically available these days or as listed are either obsolete, broken or limited in quantity.

I can recall many instances when the whole class would run out of ink answering an examination for females when the laboratory was filled with laughter of a life threatening substance due to a broken fume hood or a broken exhaust fan which left us the job of sucking the fumes ourselves.

I can still recall one hilarious occasion when my instructor, in sudden panic, barricaded me left grasp on top of a broken fume hood to stop the fumes from spreading, she either went for sampaloc and ran out of time to do so. Instead, she grasping him to walk out of our class in embarrassment. Before doing so, he had flushed the pores in some place where it was quickly forgotten. And it was only recently that it was discovered to its falling place, already discolored and totally unusable.

I have also been the recipient of electric shock brought about by my own carelessness and the wirings of the exhaust fan that has been pestered by mice. Friendships have also been ruined and some suffered in the competition to get hold of a limited number of equipment. Here I have who among my classmates are selfish jerks who hoard all the glassware and apparatuses as well as those who are generous enough to share their use.

I have been an eyewitness to the penetrate and demonstrations of the cool mentality of my colleagues as well as my own. The parasitism manifests itself when we "forget" to bring down pens, rubber rulers, markers, mark bottles, notes (as per my instructor's request) and the like. Also, the excessive smile from willing to our expenses, we can be sure that the supplies for our personal use would end up as supplies for the whole class. The cool-mentality comes to the fore when we see other groups moving ahead of us in any of our experiments.

I feel ashamed to confess that I also succumbed to such weaknesses. But that was then. And now it's just me and the long stretch before graduation. I barely have time to think of my classmates' thesis since I am too preoccupied with my own. I envy those students who will graduate without going through what I am undergoing now. I struggle to keep my head afloat in the sea of failures. I hope that my experiments will have several demanding subjects plus one back subject (my second take) on top of my thesis. My resources are already depleted and so is my hope.

But as I look at the younger classmates-members, a surge of pride runs through me. For they look up with awe to us as mature students that we are.

Looking at the younger students coughing, almost choking at the fumes and fighting over the hot plates, I just clearly eyed to realize that I was not alone in this crazy world. I once was where they are now. I have survived almost four years of this mayhem, and certainly I can survive another three months. So, hard to hope here, young students as I share some to my goal. The longest stadium I look up to me, and I cannot disappoint them. And I will not do so.

Bernadette Rhodes S. Cleofed, 23, is a 4th Chemistry senior at the University of the Philippines in the Visayas, Miagao Guimpo.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@mail.com.ph together with your address, age and the school; stories and short essays submitted or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Unpublished contributions should not have been previously published.

Faith, not fear

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

TWO SURPRISING QUESTIONS HAVE COME to mind in the last few days. The first question is, do I really believe what I say? In other words, do I express the views I hold? Am I a hypocrite? Another closely related question is, do I believe in the things I write about? Do I practice what I preach?

I've been thinking about these questions because of the reaction to my column last Monday, "Faith, not fear." In it I argued that the Philippines should not be afraid of the future, that we should not be afraid of change, that we should not be afraid of the world around us. I argued that we should not be afraid of the world around us. I argued that we should not be afraid of the world around us. I argued that we should not be afraid of the world around us.

The second question is, doesn't my support for constitutionalism and my love for history sometimes make me blind to the changing changes are inevitable? I see no contradiction between giving the Constitution and understanding that many aspects of it are outdated. Under many circumstances we have to stretch and keep moving forward, so that if the system proves itself incapable of reform, then at least appropriate mechanisms can be taken to make radical changes.

To many people, this is no radical position. The constitution is nothing new in the same manner the American constitution remains Quezon explaining in 1937 that he wanted to set up institutions such as the National Bar and Core Corps (today's National Youth Service). Quezon went on to tell the Assembly not remembering that remains relevant in this day: "For the rest, he was engaged in solving the problem in his own time—in putting the law of the universe into the hands of the wealthy land holders." I tell them, if you know what's good for you, better improve these conditions, because we do not want to have enough men for the army, so we must compulsory our soldiers from the poor. We put guns in their hands and teach them how to use them. If you are not careful, they will use those guns against you, if you won't use them yourself, give them an interest of it or they will take it all."

That was true in 1937, it is true today...the situation made worse because of three generations of released workers, instead of land, we have loan—as result of it, and from which I would other out-

THEY SAID

Undelivered justice

"You know judges are supposed to deliver justice to the people, but when justice is committed against judges, it's very important that justice be given to them, otherwise how can the judge be expected to give justice to the people if justice to them is not attended to."
—Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, proposing the creation of a special court to address attacks on judges and investigate the murders of judges, after the killing of trial court judge Jovita Salanguit

Outplaying mediocrity

"Here you don't have to have great skills to score well. You only have to have the right equipment."
—Bowling great Dang Ong, lamenting that high-tech equipment has made great bowlers out of mediocre ones

Upright

"The common reason offered to be without an upright Supreme Court."
—Atty. Joker Arroyo saying the country is "between and split" with Attorney Marguerite Acosta-Sal Jimenez

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EVAT instead of bread

LETTERS

UPON IMPLEMENTING THE 12-PERCENT var, the Arroyo administration asked the people to bear the "sacrifice" necessary to achieve long-term gains.

For decades, the biggest sacrifices, economic or political, have always been borne by the people. Those who are occupying Malacañang are not the ones who go hungry; they do not become the victims of mass lay-off, and they are not the ones who get evicted from their homes. They are not the ones who jump off bridges or poison their children because they don't know where to scrounge for food for their family's next meal. No, the tenure and the rewards defenders of EVAT are not the ones who suffer the dehumanizing conditions of poverty; it is the majority of the people.

How could they muster the guts to tell the people to make one more sacrifice? If there is anyone who needs to make that ultimate sacrifice, it is the one occupying the luxurious seat in Malacañang.

After all, it is during hot feels that the country is suffering the worst financial crisis. During his term, the country registered the highest budget deficit. During his term, the most scandalous corruption cases unraveled and the worst election fraud in Philippine history was committed. The people have sacrificed more than enough and they are living called upon to sacrifice more for the benefit of a selfish spoon, opportunistic politicians and the ghostly capitalists, all of whom stand to gain from the EVAT and splurge with its proceeds.

Unpacking the EVAT is like feeding clay to the mass of hungry, tired, jobless, loveless people who are crying for bread.

—ADRIAN KALFAGUE
Liga ng Kabataang Moro-Rizalistas Head, (League of Moro Youth), Sarilaksham Village, Rodriguez, Rizal

Misplaced Pasay terminal

I'D LIKE TO COMMEND MANY CITY'S beautification project, which included the installation of cobblestones along Roxas Boulevard, specifically from Gen. Luna Street in Baclaran to Arnaiz Street in Pasay City.

But if you're among those who regularly go to Baclaran church every Wednesday (when thousands of devotees flock to it), you wouldn't fail to notice the service road a few hundred meters from the corner of Heritage Hotel. Some unscrupulous individuals have turned a stretch of that road, fronting the Bank of Commerce and Metrobank, into a public terminal for jeeps and buses. The place has become such an eyesore that it takes away whatever Pasay City gained from its beautification project. Not only that, the place has also become a nightmare for motorists.

Did the city council of Pasay hold a public hearing on the conversion of that service road into a terminal for public utility vehicles? If I remember right, the place started to be used as a terminal way back in 2000. I wonder how many thousands of pesos are realized monthly from the operation of the terminal and who profits from it?

The location of this terminal is certainly not ideal and I wonder if the city government of Pasay has considered introducing it in view of its beautification program. Otherwise, the beautification program will not be complete.

—ESNABELLE SAMSEL
Pasay City
as_sam1982@yahoo-com.ph

Pension-less veterans

WE ARE VETERANS AND BENEFICIAries of veterans who have not received our pensions since 1999. We are always told to wait for the release of our pensions but six years of strolling is too long and exhausting.

Is there an allocation in the 2006 national budget for this purpose?

—FELIXISIMO GARTAMAN,
sgbsap@yahoo.com

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of newsstall photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4592, 897-4594, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address, and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. Their inquiries will not publish any of the written views and information is supplied.

Forgotten meaning and power of politics

I'M NEITHER ADVOCATING A SHIFT TO a new system of government nor questioning the proposed charter change. What concerns me more is the "moral cardinality" of our political leaders. For change in the form of our government will be a waste of time and money if our leaders can't make the sacrifice of completely setting aside their political ambitions.

The poor don't care whether we have a government that is presidential, parliamentary, unicameral, bicameral, federal or whatever. They can't afford to do so. Their priority is to find something to eat to keep themselves and their families alive.

All I'm saying is if it matters to make so much fuss out of the proposed shift to parliamentary system, the should rather attend to the fundamental problem of this nation, and it is not corruption in our government but the apparent death of moral ity in our political system.

Have we forgotten our moral values? Or have we not learned something from our school and from our elders? Are our moral foundations still strong?

Why do people want to be in politics? Politicians are public servants. As such, they are supposed to serve. But why is it that many of our public servants don't seem to be aware of this?

It's time for us, Filipinos, to reframe our concept of politics. Politics is public service. Politics is the power to transform this nation. I still believe in this country. I still believe in a few genuine public servants.

—ROGELIA ARTHUR II
III Applied Physics, University of the Philippines Los Baños

Dog pound in Makati

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE JAN. 28 column of Neal Cruz. Contrary to what he said, Makati City has a dog pound. This has been in existence since 1986. And from the time I was employed by the city almost 20 years ago as one of its veterinarians, I have been supervising and managing this facility for dogs.

Through the years, we have introduced a lot of improvement in our impounding facility. We have renovated dens in every cage. And each of this cage is now reinforced with plastic matting. We have also equipped them with automatic "water dispensers." And we have been providing for the needs of the impounded dogs.

We are fully aware of the revised Wildlife Act of 1998. As a matter of fact, we have adopted some of its provisions in our ordinance on animal regulation and control, which promotes responsible pet ownership in Makati City.

Dra. Orbos, the Veterinary Services Office, is implementing several programs promoting animal welfare, and Mayor Jejomar C. Binay is very supportive of these programs, some of which are: the anti-rabies mass vaccination campaign, education campaign in the different schools, neutering program which promotes dog population control, and veterinary services extended to pet owners in the city. Furthermore, we work hand-in-hand with Cara Carabelli. One mentioned is the sole animal welfare society that gives assistance to our dogs.

—RA. VIVENCIO MANALATAL DVM,
veterinarian, Makati City,
pinkyred-16@yahoo.com

Dreaming in the English language

PAG PORMAHIN (TODAY, HAUON, PIX, U2BP06) mouth a reality (Such very badly, like our country needs the thousands of jobs that our thousands of unemployed do. Perhaps, business has not yet died applying-ubitos dream company in Makati or Ortigas, etc. If So Sad, he would have found out that the interview is always always conducted in English, spoken in Filipino.

Also, the applicant cannot choose the language he is to be interviewed in. I am, therefore, saying, yes, by all means, let us bring back English as our primary medium of instruction from grade school up.

There are more opportunities open to those who are proficient with the language, and Pinoiners should know this. And to take the question: What's the language in our textbooks' dream? Why, it is English, of course!

—EDVILLENCIO,
emeraldm@hotmail.com

US' sense of justice under trial in Subic rape case

WE, OF THE RESOLUTION NG MANGAsawang Pilipino-Kabalikbalik, are enraged by the United States' arrogance and refusal to surrender the four American military cagers! A crime has been committed and justice is required.

If the US Embassy honestly wants to see that justice is served—which we doubt—then they should start by turning over the custody of the four rape suspects to Philippine authorities.

The Bush government professes itself as a defender of human rights in the world, but in fact it becomes the worst violator whenever US supremacy is in question.

For decades, the United States has been raping our country's economy and systematically committing the most heinous crimes against our women. Remember the Balangiga massacre?

The custody issue is a legal and a political question. And the United States' refusal to surrender the rape suspects adds to the historical injustices it committed against our country and our people. It's only just to cut our ties with a country that has no respect for the dignity of our women and our laws.

We should not allow the use of the Visiting Forces Agreement to evade justice. VFA should be abrogated. So must all agreements, treaties, etc. with other countries, which are not favorable to our interests and contravene our country's laws and sovereignty as a nation.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez should be ousted for their failure to protect Filipino women and to provide them with justice.

—MICHELLE CAÑOS,
national coordinator, Rebolusyon ng Mangagawang Pilipino-Kabalikbalik,
63 Emilia St., Barangay Marilag, Project 4, Quezon City

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Lilia Jan Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florante G. Solmerano

'We won the biggest prize—our lives'

By Marlon Ramos
Santa Rosa City

THREE DAYS AFTER the stampede that killed 74 people at the Philippsports Arena (formerly Ultra) in Pasig City on Saturday, a scene continues to haunt Eduardo Maliwat, a jubilous father of three.

He silently weeps deep in his tight leg-hugging for help. "Tatay, nagpa (my father's name) ako (but, please help me)," he quoted her as saying.

As much as he wanted to, Maliwat said he could not help her for he was carrying his 4-year-old son on his shoulders. "If I helped the old woman, my son would have died because I would have lost my balance. It was just a regrettable incident."

Maliwat, 35, of Barangay Tagapo, Santa Rosa City in Laguna, lamented later that the woman eventually died after being trampled on the concrete pavement.

For the past two nights, he said, the same recurrent line from deep. "I just want to say sorry to the family of that old lady. I just chose to save my son instead of her."

Maliwat said that hopefully Malkom will nursing home to one piece into the biggest prize they won.

"What is important is that we all came home alive. We just won the biggest prize at stake—our lives," he told us he ate lunch of rice and pinipigan with his family.

Maliwat and his family believed that last weekend's incident also brought out the best in Filipinos.

"The people who went to (Ben

SOME stampede survivors, like the Maliwats and Penitenciers of Santa Rosa City in Laguna, say love for family was the reason they went to the Philippsports Arena during the first anniversary show of "Wowowee." PHOTO BY JOY

were mostly poor people like us. Despite their poverty, none took advantage of the others. If they wanted to, they could just have picked up the wallets and cell phones that were strewn all over the premises," his wife Elvie said.

"Those who were not gravely hurt helped the others who were unable to stand," added Elvie, her body still sore after the mad rush.

The admitted that before and during the stampede, the people were like "hungry foam running after a single chicken."

"Nobody listened to our pleas. They seemed to be deaf. I was already crying and telling the people behind me to stop pushing, but they didn't seem to hear what I was saying," he lamented.

Elvie, just like the rest who lined up for the first anniversary of the game show "Wowowee," had hoped that she and any of her seven relatives with her would win prizes in the raffle.

She and her husband are both jobless. Their children are aged 4, 20 and 24.

They live in the house of their son-in-law Jun-jun Penitenciere, whose family occupies one of six dwellings inside the cramped, dimly lit and cramped compound in Tiongson Subdivision.

Instead of bringing home prizes, they almost got crushed to death in the stampede.

In fact, Elvie's desire to save Jun-Penitenciere was earlier listed as among the casualties of the tragedy. She survived the stampede and is now recuperating from sore legs and bruises in the body.

Elvie, as it turned out, suffered a woman's cadaver as she of fortune. She said she could not believe how her five-foot frame was able to escape from the swelling crowd and cheated death.

The Maliwats said the ordeal was even made them closer and appreciative one another even more.

Eduardo said he saw how his son-in-law Jun-jun helped cover a dozen people, mostly old women, trapped in the pile of falling people.

"I am really proud of what he did. He's a hero," Eduardo said.

Jun-jun, 20, said that after mustering the his wife and parents were safe, he immediately proceeded to assist those who were underfoot.

By his reckoning, he was able to help save a dozen injured get back on their feet.

"I never thought of myself. It just occurred to me that I have to do something to save others, especially the old women," he said. He lost his shoes during the commotion and even loose hamburned.

Jun-jun said he was saddened by reports that praised the Manny Pacquiao fight between Miguel Barillanes and the ABS-CBN management for the tragedy.

He said Barillanes should not be held liable, but the security guards.

Some of the guards in the area, he said, were laughing as the people pushed and shoved to get their tickets at the entrance gate.

"There were clearly lapses in security. But the negligence of the security guards made it worse. Instead of helping us and rescuing some, they just laughed at the crowd," he said.

Other family members support Jun-jun's claim. They said the security guards were told few minutes before the gates would open, but they were already pushing and shoving.

After what happened in there, the family said they had only one request: that they forget the guarantee of 600-GMA would grant them.

"Maybe they (the management) wouldn't give to us and the others who were injured the chance to play and win in the show. After all, we risked our lives just to be there," Eduardo said.

Elvie, on the other hand, said the hoped that the government and the network will give poor people like them the opportunity to have decent jobs so a small capital to start a small business.

"They may include hotel or restaurant, food or food stalls or a mortgage-free sari-sari store so we can have jobs, we wouldn't ever have to take queue and risking our lives for a chance to join a game show like Wowowee," she said.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB/Loan No. 1789-PHI (SF)) towards the cost of the Multisector Training Agricultural Advancement and Support (MASAS) and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan for eligible payments under the contract for which this Invitation for Bids is issued.
2. The GOP-Eastern Visayas Joint Venture invites bids for supply, delivery to the site, installation and commissioning of the following:
   a. Office Supplies & Materials and Medicines – Lot No. 1: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No. 2: Chemicals, Materials – Food Items – Lot No. 3: Chemicals for Drinking Water – Lot No. 4: Materials for Water Facility – Lot No. 5: Equipment – Lot No. 6: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No. 7: Equipment – Lot No. 8: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No. 9: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No. 10: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No. 11: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No. 12: Medicines and Medicinal Materials – Lot No.

Across the NATION

Peace with MILF near, say negotiators

KUALA LUMPUR—THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT and Moro separatist rebel negotiators said Tuesday they had reached a preliminary deal on the controversial issue of ancestral lands.

Two days of preliminary peace talks in Malaysia ended with both parties "successfully wrapping up the consensus points of the ancestral domain issue," emphasizes from the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front said in a joint statement from the southern resort of Port Dickson.

"The ancestral domain agreement may be signed by late March 2006, simultaneously with the inception of the formal talks," they said.

The parties had agreed to determine the scope of the Moro homeland based on territorial maps and data submitted by both parties, it said.

They settled on measures to address "the legitimate grievances" of the Moro people "arising from the unjust dispossession, and/or marginalization" and "their right to use and develop their ancestral domain and ancestral lands."

They also reached agreement on economic cooperation, said the statement.

Silvestre Afable, who led the Philippine government delegation, was quoted in saying by the official information agency that the Philippine government was committed to achieving peace and "very happy that the MILF had cooperated with seriousness and commitment."

He predicted that they would reach their goal sooner than expected.

MILF delegation leader Mohagher Iqbal said their hope of achieving a comprehensive and durable peace in Mindanao was "getting nearer and nearer." Among the issues in its discussed was a political solution between the two parties, he said.

Iqbalani has been moderating in peace talks between Manila and the 12,000-strong MILF which has been fighting for over two decades to set up an Islamic state in predominantly Christian Mindanao.

The MILF has been demanding that it be granted rights over its "ancestral domain" or homeland which traditionally means the entire Mindanao, where they have been fighting to establish an independent Islamic state.

The Philippine government and the MILF signed a ceasefire in 2001 and quieted peace talks, but one of the rebelling blocks rum the rebels' demand for independence in favor of their autonomy.

"Frankly we are now in the final stretch of our peace talks, to set journey towards finding a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution to this problem in Mindanao," Iqbal said.

Iqbal said the government and the MILF central committee had to "seize this opportunity."

The new round of negotiations, which started on Monday, focused on the form of government under the proposed political settlement for the MILF and the future of its fighters.

But Iqbal said that despite the bright prospects, the gains of the peace process could still be spoiled by groups who want violence to reign in Mindanao. —AFP with a report from Jeoff Fox Maloney, PDI Mindanao Bureau

COMBAT UNIFORM
A police officer looks on a bloodied pair of pants left at a hillside in Sta. Ignacia, Tarlac where government soldiers clashed with communist guerrillas last week. The pants were believed to belong to a rebel guerrilla.

Gambling operator surfaces, complains of rising amount of protection money

By Felipe V. Calleo
PDI Visayas Bureau

JUBAN CITY—A GAMBLING OPERATOR WHO recently police have to confirm that he stopped operating an illegal numbers game because he could no longer afford paying protection money demanded by a provincial police group.

Angelito "Peewee" Beaston told city police officials that he stopped his illegal gambling operation on Jan. 31.

Beaston, of Poblacion Bonao town in Cagdi, said he ceased his "Pick 2" and "Pick 3" gambling operations because he could no longer afford the protection money allegedly demanded by the Provincial Special Operations Group (PSOG) under Senior Insp. Ferdie Marquez.

Senior Supt. Cipriano Querol, provincial police director, dismissed Beaston's claim against his boss as "purely lies."

He said Beaston stopped his operation because the provincial police, particularly the PSOG, were after him and his illegal operations.

"Pick 2" and "Pick 3" operates like the online lottery was by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), Beaston said. It also involves a bettor picking six numbers for a minimum bet of P10.

The winning numbers are based on the winning numbers of bets. But unlike in lotto where players have to get the six numbers right to win, a "Pick 2" and "Pick 3" bettor wins by getting just two or three numbers right.

Beaston said he was forced to go to the city police for help after receiving reports that the PSOG was planning on frame him on illegal drug and gun charges.

Baguio reacts to Pasig stampede

BAGUIO CITY—Mayor Braulio Yaranon said new rules regulating public performances, parades and street dances in the city on Sunday, a day after the stampede that killed 74 people at the Philippine Sanitarium Pasig City.

Administrative Order 20 requires all association to obtain permits.

Yaranon said the "stampeder caused by surging, uncontrolled, massive crowds such as those in religious rites in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, sports events in Europe and many in Ultra in Pasig City."

He said all public activities, including parades, tournaments, performances and similar activities ... "where there is numerous gathering and concentration of crowds, spectators, participants, and the general public ... shall be issued a permit as a date."

The order states that no permit for a similar activity will be issued within 72 hours after the end of the previous activity.

This will affect the 11th staging of the Baguio Flower Festival, which will be renamed as "new simultaneous events by non-competing organizations.

The festivals have drawn about a million tourists in the last 12 years, according to the Department of Tourism.

The executive secretary that will come to play due to the unofficial countdown is expected to draw over bigger crowds, Edward Cabrera, PDI N (now Bureau)

ROUNDUP

Clark to pursue tax perks

CLARK Development Corp. will be relentless in pursuing a permanent solution to the issue on tax and duty free privileges here, following the Supreme Court's refusal to reverse a ruling last year that only Clark is allowed to grant tax perks to investors. "With the highest-level's decisions, CDC president Antonio Ng said in a press statement that the CDC would pursue "with even greater vigor ... the passing of two bills in Congress to ease-up apprehension of investors to invest in the Clark Special Economic Zone." Ng said one more member is of the House of Representatives are supporting HB 4900 and 4901 authored by Rep. Jesli Lapus (3rd District, Tarlac) to clarify tax incentives for Clark investors.

Mayor offers reward for killers

BAMBANAY, Tarlac—Mayor Marino Morales has offered P1,000,000 to anyone who can give information on the suspects in the murder of three town officials. Police said victims Jun Ramos Rivera, 39, Michael Manalo, 33, and Ronnel Adrian, 32, were walking in Zilla Bypass in Barangay San Francisco here when four men stopped them. The suspects, who were armed with .45-cal. and 9 mm guns, ordered them to drop to the ground and then shot them. The victims' health commissioner, Ricardo Carreon, 50, was left in the shoulders and survived the attack.

Jun Mallig, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Less known boxer gets award

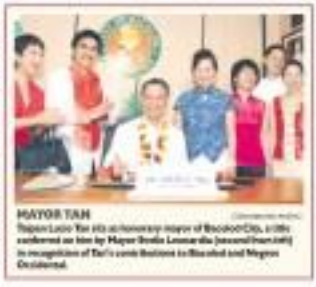
DUMAGUETE CITY—The provincial government will give a P100,000 cash incentive to boxer Jerome Jaca for his victory over Mexican opponent Gerardo Fernandez in Los Angeles on Jan. 27. Jaca dropped Fernandez in the first round of their fight, which was one of the undercard bouts of the Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales rematch. Jaca, whose real name is Jhonel Divino, is a native of Barangay Bolocboloc in Sibulan town. It has no kin here. Division also gave Jaca P10,000 cash and a plaque of appreciation. Division said Jaca's victory inspired many young men of the town to take interest in boxing.

Penny Amarante, PDI Visayas Bureau

P98-M EU grant

CITY OF CALAMBA—Governor Jocelyn Limbo received a P98-million European Union grant, according to Provincial Health Officer Bernadette C. Legaspi. It will be used to improve the provincial hospital, satellite hospitals, 13 rural health units and 15 barangay health stations. It will fund the 5-month investment Plan for 2006-2010 which seeks to improve health services.

Marianne T. Wade, Jr. PDI Southern Luzon Bureau



MAYOR TAN
Tagum Lazo Tan sits as honorary mayor of Bacolod City, is also conferred on him by Mayor Benito Lecaroz Jr. (second from left) in recognition of Tan's contributions to Bacolod and Negros Occidental.

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Tug-of-war for cash found in stampede

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TWO DAYS AGO, THE OSMEÑA CITY RESCUE Times returned P49,000 in cash to the daughter of Aurora Serrano who was killed during the stampede at the Philsports Arena in Pasig. She forgot to take the money.

The story would have ended there except that another family for some reason is determined to donate the money.

Rumbly-Jacksons and his three brothers appeared at the Kalinan Police Station office yesterday morning, claiming that the money belonged to their mother, Virginia, who died with three other Josephine Rose during the stampede.

Jacksons told the Inquirer that his mother had withdrawn P50,000 from the Philippine Veterans Bank in Camp Aguinaldo on Friday noon. The money came from the pension fund of their late father who had served in the Philippine Army, he said.

From the bank, their mother, together with Jess, and her other daughter, Emelita Vilachi, decided to go to the Philsports Arena to line up for the first anniversary celebration of the ABS-CBN noontime show Wowowee.

But Virginia and Josephine ended up dead after the stampede the following morning.

Vilachi, who was farther down the line, survived. She told her brothers that their mother had P50,000 on her when she died.

Shocked

"We were told the money had been recovered by rescuers. But we were shocked when our neighbors told us that the Pasig City Government had turned over P49,000 to another family," said Rumbly-Jacksons, another son.

Veteran volunteers Candy Lucero turned over the cash to Josephine's daughters Lovelady and Shirley on Monday afternoon inside Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio's office.

Lucero said she had recovered the money from Serrano's pocket when she retrieved the body for identification cards.

The Jacksons, however, said the money could have belonged to their mother.

Bank certification

The family produced a certification from a bank which showed that Virginia had withdrawn Sit P1,000 bills.

But the money reportedly recovered from Serrano were 49 P1,000 bills, leaving police uncertain.

Rescue volunteer Rommel Sandoval, who reportedly recovered the money with Lucero, told the Inquirer they also recovered death's ation cards along with the P1,000 bills.

The card belonged to Serrano, Sandoval said.

"The bills were folded into three piles. There were also dead Brazilian cards inside the pocket, including a voter recipient card," Sandoval said in Filipino.

"We were able to reach down her hands because of the IDs," he added.

Jacksons also said they would invite both families to police headquarters for questioning to find out if one—or two—were non-perfect

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Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres

RED Bull's Paul Villanueva drives through the defense put up by Purefoods' Rogelio Yap in their series opener last night. ALEXANDER A. MAO

Villanueva lifts Bulls past Giants in Game 1

By Jane Navarro

ENRICO VILLANUEVA CUT DOWN THE PUREFOODS CHUBEE Giants down to size as swaytime Kia a 107-102 Red Bull victory at the start of the Jose May Coffee PBA Fiesta Conference Finals last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

The ball-strong Villanueva outplayed Asefa Bazemmada by pumping home nine of his team's 16 points in the concerns period, including two game-clinching free throws with 22.3 ticks remaining.

Noy Castillo came off the bench with back-to-back three-pointers as the Giants moved within 102-104, but Red Bull used the ground to take the best-of-seven series opener.

The Giants overcame an 11-point deficit to send the game into overtime at 89-all, but their unforeseen high 32 turnovers proved too much for them in the end.

With that Game 1 exploit, the Bulls now have a 64.8 percent winning probability since 35 out of 54 teams which won the first game of a best-of-seven championship series went on to grab the title.

Villanueva finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds, combining with James Yap and Jeffy Villanueva to give Red Bull a 102-96 lead with 37 seconds left in the extra period.

Turnovers told on the Giants so early as the first half, where they committed 15, that allowed the Bulls to take a 45-41 halftime lead.

Earlier, skill- support a magical stint with a 108-96 victory over Shrimpy Chichoa in a low-scheduling battle to clinch third place outright.

"I felt like we've won the championship," said Arc21 coach Bo Perasol after inserting the Express to their best finish ever. The first Lina entered Sunday's previous best was sixth in the 2003 Fiesta Conference.

The victory enabled the Express to finish their second straight second-after finishing third in the 2003 Invitational behind Alaska and Coca-Cola.

Slower, Dennis had a superb farewell performance with 25 points, 11 rebounds, seven assists, four steals and three blocks.

Chris Porter led the Kings with 28 points and 17 rebounds while Niel Meink and Stanley Gabayan added 17 and 13 points, respectively.

TERRAFIRMA (Dyip) – Asaytime 28, Yap 20, Pingris 9, Reyes 9, Cruz 7, Salvador 7, Ilaw 6, Mallari 5, Arnaiz 5, Abad 2, Yeo 0.

Quarters: 24-20, 45-41, 75-68, 102-96, 107-102.

UAAP nixes DLSU cage leave plan

By Jasmine N. Payo

WHILE A MEMBER CAN TAKE A LEAVE OF absence, it should not be free one more semester but all sports.

This rule was cited by the UAAP board yesterday when it turned down De La Salle University's proposal to skip one basketball season in the wake of the eligibility scandal that rocked the undefeated Green Archers last year.

"While recognizing the right of every member university to take a leave of absence, the board likewise took cognizance of the fact that basketball is a compulsory sport, which every member university must participate in," the board said in a statement after an emergency meeting at Casa Espanol.

The board stressed that La Salle may still take a break from the league next season, but the university must file a leave of absence from all 14 sports covering the men, women and juniors divisions.

"Any member school has the right to take a leave of absence from the league," said Dr. Ricardo Sterling, league secretary treasurer. "But if one member has to take a leave of absence, it has to be to the entirety of the league."

Last Jan. 23, La Salle filed a one-year leave of absence from the men's basketball tournament only.

La Salle officials said the move was part of the school's attempt to rebuild its cage program ruined by the eligibility scandal involving Asefaw Mark Bedaso and Tim Gatchalian.

However, a UAAP rule states that a member school cannot pull out of one of two sanctioned sports—basketball and volleyball.

"We are now leaving it to the hands of De La Salle to decide if it would continue with its leave [which should be sweeping]," added Sterling.

The same statement also hinted that the eligibility case hounding La Salle would not be closed any time soon, noting that the UAAP board "would be acting on the report of the fact-finding committee in its next regular meeting late next month."

The league earlier said that the investigating committee would submit its decision and recommendations by the end of February.

Suspension is among the possible sanctions the league could impose on La Salle due to the eligibility controversy. Earlier years ago, the UAAP also slapped a one-year suspension on Adamson for fielding super Rhoda Aquino in the men's basketball tournament despite academic deficiencies.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Viloria battles former world titlist Feb. 18 /A22
■ Painters seek title sweep vs Wizards /A20

West Visayans forge ahead

LEGAZPI, BAGUIO CITY... A FOUR-WAY fight for overall honors shaped up as Western Visayas forged ahead by only two gold medals over Central Visayas on the second day of the Private Schools Athletic Association (Palarong Pambansa) National Games yesterday at the Narciso Ramos Sports and Civic Center here.

The WV delegation amassed 25 golds on top of 20 silvers and 22 bronzes while the CV squad had a gold-silver-bronze harvest of 23-15-23 as of 4:30 p.m.

Southern Mindanao and Southern Tagalog shared third with 18 golds and host Bicol was the only other region with double-digit number of golds with 15.

Central Luzon and Western Mindanao had a gold each while NCR-North, Central Mindanao, Cagayan Valley, Caraga and Ilocos were scoreless.

Meanwhile, Rochelle Crespo and Russel Gamero starred for the Bicolanos' strong 13-gold showing for the day. Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Net Bicol Luzon bureau

NATIONAL Capital Region captain Ma Jessica Gonzaga battles the Western Visayans in the Palarong games yesterday AFP

Painters seek title sweep vs Wizards

SAMC TODAY (Ilac Avelino Gym)
3:30 p.m.—Talese Diaz vs Regenie Cortez (Trinder)

IT TOOK SOME TIME FOR JOSLEN GARCIA to adjust to San mere team four where he did, he played basic tactics over for Rain or Shine in the ongoing PBA Fortune Cup title series.

With the Elasto Painters enjoying a 2-0 lead, the young forward is expected to play a key role again when Rain or Shine shoots for a three-game championship sweep of the Magnolia Wizards today at the San Andres Gym.

"The hard work is now paying off," said Painters coach Gabe Garcia of the 6a Joslin standout and one of former pro Sunny Cabalza.

The Painters, whose franchise owns the most number of titles in the league, and the Wizards collide in Game 3 of the best-of-five series at 3:30 p.m.

"I told them not to relax until we have the trophy in our hands," said Garcia. "I already told the boys to give their best effort to finish the series."

"Of course it's a different feeling if you sweep a title series, that's why we will work hard and play passionately to win the series," Garcia added.

After Most Valuable Player Jojo Tangkay and veterans Jaypee Tan and Marvin Cenigueta pioneered the Painters on the floats, it was Cabalza's turn to deliver sensational performances by averaging 20.5 points on a 60 percent field goal shooting in the playoffs.

The Wizards know their momentum isn't on their side, but remain optimistic that they can reversed the series.

"There's still hope," said Wizards coach Ricky Ismael. "I trust my players."

The Wizards aren't shooting for an impossible task. In 1998, Ut. 2 Bubbling blocked more than a 0-2 deficit versus Sunday to bag the championship. Jaymiko W. Reyes

Surprising Ubasa & ecstatic Nelson

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

GRAND, DAYTE... THE HEADLINES OF TRANSwork in golf are usually beyond defining. At least by tradition, the best means on paper to a Pro-Am tournament do not win.

The Korea Hibiscus National Pro-Am this holds to several day rules at Riviera's Langer here is no exception.

Take yesterday's run. The leaders, Ervin Ubasa and Ricky Elena, were practically unknown until yesterday.

It's only the first day and, ostensibly, there is a golf course that will have three more rounds to play for the P1.7 million pot staked mainly by Hot Shots of Ubix Corporation.

But if only for their best that who considered exceptional by the standards of mediocre, the leaders bear watching.

For one, Ubasa, 20, just turned pro two years ago. There was nothing spectacular about him before he turned pro; he remains unspectacular (recently) after he turned pro.

For another, Ubasa, 33, left the country for England when his wife Tessie told Ubasa to play golf only seven years ago.

And get this startling fact: It was their first tournament in the United event that requires a disavital case/ball alternately.

And take this: Ubasa not here at Riviera's largest only yesterday and, moreover, have yet worded to play his first round in the course generally conceded as one of the country's toughest layouts.

Now they are leading the nation's oldest professional golf tournament born in 1956—etc—and only in age to the Philippine Open that began in 1913.

Although it's still too early to say whether they will take out Saturday's cut—a plan already to Arellia and Ubasa What they've done yesterday is another good copy; a topic of clubhouse talk, in a spot that is traditionally littered with improbabilities.

* * *

While at it, was glad I played from yesterday to Hideki and Yildiz Mizoguchi of Benin City. Tito and Babs Lazard of New York City. Dante and Ching Fernandez of Phoenix, Arizona, and Art Arabia of Calauag, Quezon, as they paid the Korea Hibiscus event a surprise visit on their way to Manila from an overnight stay at Sta Elena Hotel in nearby Baguio City.

My dear buddy, Ildoso, a retired schoolmaster like Ubasa, can surely remark as it was his first stop to act bottom in golf course.

"I'll later plenty of stories to tell my friends back in Davao City when I go home," said Ildoso, who might for 30 years like Ubasa. "This is really an experience for me, seeing the Riviera golf course that is so beautiful really. Ah, the vast open space all around us, the sea to finish to breath, the lush greenery all over. Unforgettable indeed!"

He cannot said he had really wanted to become a golfer "since I first arrived in America, in Chicago actually, but I discovered my skin was allergic to the sun."

Still, he bequeathed golf dolls. "But only to drink here with my buddies at the clubhouse after they've completed their rounds."

I offered Tito and my friends here at the handsome Riviera clubhouse, but they preferred bodyguard-tipped direct from the common bank.

"I hope they enjoyed every drop of it as they've been harvested last today," said Ate Dagdagan, the amiable Riviera golf course spokeswoman.

Into they did, Ate. Thanks.

* * *

BATHRAK. Tokens to The Zombies recent, particularly that one at Ayanta on 6th. 13, are selling like hotcakes. "But everything's under control," said Luke Bailico of the organizing Junior Tournament in cooperation with Steve O'Neal. Thank God. My colleague Quinito mentioned "the four late strokes last week a beautiful piece about the return of the Zombies to Manila after their first visit here nearly 30 years ago. "Should I try to hide..." Please! That opening line of "The Zombies' hit "The Way I Feel Inside" really knocked me out the first time I heard it in the States!... I welcome it in the world Luke Gregory Wagner, who was born yesterday to proud parents Lark and Lorie. Cheers!

Tagaytay dribblers get baptism of fire in NBC

EDENSION TEAM AMANG TAGaytay NEC get its baptism of fire when it competes in the fourth leg of the Nissan's Spring National Basketball Conference pre-season series on the 14-16 at the Tagaytay Convention Center.

Joining Mayor Bambit Tolentino's rogues in the tournament are the Pagadian Eaglemen of Mayor Sammy Co, Bacolod Harbour Centre and NBC president Richard "Dic" Pedillo's Spring Cooking Oil Gliders.

"This tourney serves as part of our preparation for our initial participation in the NBC which opens on March 10 here in our city" said Tolentino, who is also known for his passionate of chess and cycling.

Batangas Tagaytay's team will be launched Feb. 14 before the start of the pre-season series supported by Subjects Liners, Molten, Accusonic, Spalding, Cooking Oil and Prime Channel.

Batangas Tagaytay will be handled by former Mirus and PBA player Ramil Bayot with Ramil Serrus as his assistants. Team manager is Councilor Percival Wills.

The players include Chris Cabiles, Joel Pendiz, McDonald Santos, Boy Glen, The Boyet, Ian Bellejesa, Dan Carlo Yabut, Eric Lanico, Ian Bautista, Don Mendoza, Nelson Ocsaka and Maurice Lanzana.

TENNIS STAR. Maria Sharapova finds she Prince ID White vital in her campaign.

JVC expands jr badminton program

JVC, RESPONDING TO THE GROWing clamor to expand the base of its junior badminton program, will now include a 12-under category when it merges the nationwide JVC Open Junior Championships beginning next month in various Ild malls.

Players who used to play in the 13-and-under category the past two years will now have a separate tournament of their own as the sponsoring JVC has decided to put up the new category while retaining the 10-under class and the 16-under division.

"JVC recognizes the need to provide our junior players a separate tournament and give them the exposure they deserve," said JVC (Hdo.) Inc. general manager Edwin Tolentino.

The organizing JMC said the tournament will start March 25-26 at SM Megamall.

Entry forms can be downloaded from the event's website and can be sent through fax at 894-2995 and 892-9666. For details, contact 894-2995, 8920666 and 725-3588.

NAMED TEE CHAMPS. Balanta Carlos (center) and Simon Santi (second from left) emerged overall champions of the 22nd Mango Tee Invitational member-guest tournament at the Alabang Country Club Inc. From left, ACCI chair Johnny Carello, Jude Cancellar of Smart Communications, Ed Chua of Filipinas Shell Petroleum, ACCI president Paul Cortez and Rolly Cano of the organizing committee.

TODAY'S UNIONS VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE

BALARA ELEMENTARY, DE LA SALLE-LIPA, CHRISTIAN VALUES SCHOOL SCORE IN STRAIGHT SETS

Mr. Toby Claudio, Operations Manager of Toby's Sports, together with Organizer Freddie Villarama and Host School Principals, Helen Villanueva welcomes and address the participants, sponsors and guests during the opening of the 1st Toby's Sports Junior Volleyball League.

The Junior girls' teams showed their skills as they participated in the initial games of the Toby's Sports Junior Volleyball League at the MGC New Life Christian Academy Gym last Sunday, February 5th.

Balara Elementary beat St. Francis of Assisi 25-8, 25-6 while De La Salle-Lipa likewise stunned St. Jude Catholic School 25-7, 25-11. In a closely contended match, Christian Values School defeated host MGC New Life Christian Academy 25-20, 25-22.

On Saturday, February 11, matches will be held at the Bataan Village Gym beginning 10:00am as follows:

10:00am - DLS vs UPHM (B)
11:00am - DLS vs UPHM (G)
1:00pm - LICS vs CSA (G)
2:00pm - LICS vs CHS (B)
3:00pm - BES vs CHS (G)

The league returns to the MGC New Life Christian Academy Gym on Sunday, February 12 and will start at 12:00pm with five games as follows:

12:00pm - WAC vs SLS (B)
1:00pm - SHC vs UPHM (G)
2:00pm - DLS vs BES (G)
3:00pm - LICS vs MGC (G)
4:00pm - LICS vs UPHM (B)

In association with:

Shakey's

Mikasa Official Volleyball of the League

Powered by

Do you know how long it took for Jim Paredes to write the EDSA song "Handog ng Pilipino sa Mundo?"

EDSA 20 A PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER VIDEO DOCUMENTARY FEBRUARY 26, MONDAY 8:30 PM ABC

BRC hosting drag racing

IT WILL BE A WILD CHASE FOR THE LIMITED Drag Race Driver of the Year award as Bobby Carstairs and Lee-Jord Cordero join the contenders for the glory in the championship round of the 2006 Red Horse PCEC National Drag Racing Championship Series on Saturday at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Rosario, Batangas.

Carstairs and Cordero now sitdate 30 points after trailing their respective divisions in two of the four drag legs of the event held in cooperation with the Automobile Association of the Philippines.

Another win would give Quick Trap pilot Sonny the Tamer of Group E1...Jack Daniels Mazesstro Racing and Weber Autos of Shandra Racing—a tough fight in the event sponsored by Red Horse, PCEC, Petron and Quaker.

Carstairs leads the title race in the Sportsman class while Cordero ruled the second and final Drag re-match in the solo-up sport in the Pro-Class.

CLOSE! Carstairs in a bid of defending his title with amateur partner JR Tanpiens.

Arcillas-Ubasa paces Konica pro-am golf

By Jong Arsenio

SILANG, CAVITE—TEE UMBRELLAed pair of Edwin Arcillas and Bobbyann Hong Ubasa came closest to par with a 2-over 72 yesterday that was good for a one-stroke lead over two-time defending champion Gerard Cariaga and JR Tanpiens and two others at landmic after the opening round of the Konica Minolta National Pro-Am here.

The 29-year-old Arcillas and Ubasa, a personal assistant at Intramuros and London who is encountering here with his family made a birdie at the 13th hole against three bogeys in their nine of 37-36 at the treacherous Langer course of the Riviera Golf and Country Club as they grabbed the spotlight from the more prominent names in this P1.7 million tourney.

Cariaga and his buddy Tanpiens put in motion their bid for a third consecutive crown by turning in one of the three 74s. They were joined by the Indiana Bernardo, Anthony Fernando and Nilbard Alaeing Marvin Tinamaan combinations.

Jose Baptiano and Jessie Canoy shared 76th place with four others while former winners Saul and Joel Milano were in a seventeen-legion at 21st that also included Rey Bagunon and Riviera club champion Bobby Celestino.

The event is backed by Unigate Enterprises, Pilar Philex and Global in cooperation with Japan's Konica Minolta, the world's leader in digital imaging. It is supported by Epson, Bristell, PCI Bank, Land Bank, PBC, Sun, Bonifacio MVP91 Express, Equitable Bank, SMC, Solar, Cavitex, Glutenite, BPI, Union Bank, Asiff Asia, Inc., Benpaint, Metrobank, DOH, Industrial Waste Services Inc. and Interstellation.

Bacolod, Iloilo hosting Camel Supercross 2006

FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S (SOLO) successful season which drew record crowds, the Camel Supercross will hold two more competitions in the coded City and Iloilo City on Feb. 19 and March 5.

Dubbed "Camel Supercross International Championship Series 2006," the two-part competition, sanctioned by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Nemsaa), will again feature the best riders in the region.

Heading the riders vying for honors this year are internationalists Glenn Aguilar of the Philippines and James Robinson of New Zealand.

Also entered are multi-titled Jessie Saxing, Kenneth San Andres, Ruben de la Cruz, Hope Ruiz and other talented riders from Western Visayas and key cities and provinces in the country.

"We, in the previous years, are very happy to hold another edition of the Camel Supercross in Bacolod and Iloilo," said Camel brand marketing manager Edwin Ocampo.

Nemsaa president Ricci Palma expressed his gratitude to Camel for hosting two more supercross races this year. Call (032) 4092263.

SPORTSWATCH

SAPC, St. Scho gain semifinals

DEFENDING champion San Antonio de Padua College (SAPC) and St. Scholastica's College (SSC) pulled off contrasting victories Sunday to lead the semifinals round of the 43rd School Interathletic Athletic Association (SIAA) 1st Elementary Basketball League at the Ateneo Cagayan Gymnasium in Cagayan De Oro.

SAPC rallied from a 10-point deficit to edge Xavier Ateneo, 27-26, in the quarterfinals round of the tournament's first day. Sunday's other two matches, SSC routed St. Mary's College Kauswagan 20-11, 21-11 in quarterfinals in the round organized by the Angels Care Center and supported by Nike.

SBC-Alabang, Ateneo prevail

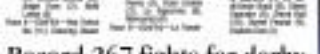
UNDEFEATED College Alabang, Ateneo de Manila, and St. Scholastica's College emerged champions in the Private Schools Basketball League (PSBL) last Sunday at the Filoteo gym in Pasay. In the collegiate division, SBC-Alabang beat Ateneo, 68-60. Ateneo ruled the men's division at the expense of Xavier, 68-62, while St. Scholastica's College beat Assumption College, 52-42, for the women's title. Players of the champion's top contenders were Paul Milo and Donald Pascual of Batibot Distribution; Nicky Ildefonso of Bread Joy Bakeries of Pasay branch; and PBL commissioner Rudy Diaz.

2nd Caddies' Open tourney this month

CALAMBA, MISAMIS — The second staging of the National Caddies' Open would mark an exciting fight for regional supremacy with bets from the Olympic and Luzon and strategic their Mindanao counterparts. "This could provide an interesting outright to the tournament," said tournament co-chair Hermie Laquiers. Davao's Jessie Alvarez and brothers Alexis and Joseph Lobaton topped last year's edition staging. Applications can be faxed to the secretariat to Calamba on the (089) 5-0-0001 from Wood Wood 80-1726 Mindanao or betters Feb. 10. Call (087) 3-0-0-2-1 on (87) 1-0-0-2-1.

NCR non-master championship

TAGUIG MAYOR Cayetano Bautista (C) cross-master shows championship objects to organizers of the office of Marketplace Executive Bird in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. The three-day event, sponsored by Mayor Bautista's "Bird Ball" to promote of Taguig City, is open to all certified chess players and will serve as the first of several regional qualification tournaments to select the members of the Philippine team to compete in the 2006 World Chess Olympiad to be held in Turin, Italy, on May. Chess zone 5 contact tournament director Willie Nuñez at (02) 0-2-1-0-0-0 or (0) Cesar Poblete (0912) 2-3-0-0-0-0 for details.



Record 267 fights for derby

A RECORD 267 FIGHTS WILL BE held at the 13,000-seat Bulacan Sports Complex in connection with the 16th Anniversary 6-cock derby today.

The first fight is at 10 a.m. "There are now just ordinary matches," said host Bobby Ugat.

"With 1.6 million and bound over Bayani known as stake, it will be a battle of champion versus champ ion."

The Bayani known will be given to the fastest winning time.

A second 624 rooster, never vaccinated in this event, which draw the top guns like Ben Lim, Tito Delos Reyes, Boy Dionisio, Raymond Yalapo, Mario Pinto, Tee Wees, Ding Lucas, Romero Yu, William Go, Allan Sison and Boy de Boer. For details, contact 0911 2271 and 800-1688.

NEW SPEEDWAY: Mitsu Nissi president Jaime Sanchez (4th) and Clark Development Corp. president and CEO Antonio Ng shake hands after signing the contract for the construction of the Clark International Speedway in Mabalacat, Pampanga. Witnesses are Batangas Racing Circuit and Commerce Circuit Phils. manager Lucio Tan Jun (standing from left) Clark Development Corp. marketing manager Rubel A.S. Cabral, Senior Investment Promotions officer Andre Benedict T. Rivera, CRCW's Legal Services Division lawyer Joanne O. Vitug-Bungubelas and asst. manager for Investment Promotions Division Rommel C. Martinez.

Hawks shut down Pistons

NEW YORK—JOE JOHNSON scored the game-winning layup with 7.3 seconds remaining to give the Atlanta Hawks a stunning 99-98 victory over the Detroit Pistons at the Philips Arena on Tuesday.

Johnson's lay-up was part of a team-high 29 point effort, while Zaza Pachulia added 16 points and Al Horford chipped in 14 for the surging Hawks, who have won five of their past five games.

With the defeat, Atlanta (33-12) handed the Pistons their second straight loss by the first time this season.

Detroit (39-6) had two late chances to win but Richard Hamilton missed a jumper in the dying seconds and the Pistons failed to get a shot off on their final possession in the last second.

Tayshaun Prince had 29 points to lead the Pistons, who led 60-57 after the first half and shot 61.1 per cent from the field.

But the Hawks stayed close to the Pistons all night and battled to 81-77 after three quarters before finally taking the lead with 5:50 to go on a basket by Johnson.

Chauncey Billups added 20 points and seven assists for the Pistons, while Rasheed Wallace scored 18.

In New York, Elton Brand scored 25 points and had 11 rebounds as the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Knicks, 89-81.

Chris Kaman added 22 points and 11 rebounds for the Clippers.

Jalen Rose, recently acquired from the Toronto Raptors for Antonio Davis, scored 20 points and Eddy Curry added 14 points for the Knicks.

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 26 points and had 12 rebounds as the Mavericks beat the Los Angeles Lakers, 102-87.

Josh Howard added 22 points and had 10 rebounds for the Mavericks.

Brian Cook scored 16 points and Kobe Bryant added 24 points for the Lakers. Reuters

SOLAR Sports will air the Chicago Cheetahs tussle at 10:30 a.m. today with a replay at 8 p.m.

BROKEN? Viloria (left) faces a tough foe in Jose Antonio Aguirre.

Viloria battles former world titlist Feb. 18

BY NOE ADRIANO, JR. WITH ring ace Gec Filipino-American Brian Viloria duplicate the performance in his first title defense?

The answer will be known when Viloria, dubbed the "Hawaiian Punch," strikes for World Boxing Council (WBC) light flyweight crown against Jose Antonio Aguirre of Mexico on Feb. 18 (Feb. 19 in Manila) at the Aladdin Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Viloria's first title defense will serve as an opportune for the World Boxing Organization (WBO) and ex-weight title clash between reigning champ Antonio Margarito and Manuel Gomez.

The fight will be aired by Solar Sports starting at 10 a.m.

Viloria, 25, captured the title with a sensational first round knockout win over another defending champion Eric Mika, who is another Mexican, last Sept. 10 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California.

The fighter from Waipahu, Hawaii is undefeated in 19 fights, 12 coming inside the distance.

Aguirre is by no means a patsy.

He knows what it takes to win a title being a former WBC minimumweight champion himself.

The 30-year-old fighter has a professional record of 20-4-1 with 20 KOs. One of his victims during his reign in the minimumweight was Filipino Mercito Medilco.

Aguirre is managed by Eric Morales, who once stopped in the 10th round by Mercito Pacquiao in their rubber-end rematch last month also in Las Vegas.

Viloria is trained by Hergenio's American mentor Freddie Roach.

Larios leads race for Pacman's foe

FORMER WORLD BOXING Council super bantamweight champion Oscar "Chololo" Larios of Mexico appears to be the top choice among possible Manny Pacquiao foes in a non-title appearance before his country-men in May.

Pacquiao, according to sources, is willing and ready to re-pounce with bowling fanes can catwalk 180Z the event, which will serve as his warm-up for a third encounter with Erik Morales of Mexico on May 14.

Rafael Mendoza, who acts as Larios' international agent, declared in an interview with the Mexican press that his ward is ready to face Pacquiao in May.

Larios won the WBC super bantamweight in 2002 at the expense of Israel Vazquez and held it for three years.

Sabres L. Lagumbay

RiteMED

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Product	Suggested Retail Price	% Savings vs. Leading Brand
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COZAAR®	25mg Tab	9.00 40%
	50mg Tab	12.18 44%
	100mg Tab	2.10 74%
HYZAAR®	100mg/25mg Tab	5.40 74%
	50mg/12.5mg Tab	2.82 72%
ATACAND®	8mg Tab	6.89 76%
	16mg Tab	11.66 75%
ANTI-CHOLESTEROL		
ZOCOR®	40mg Tab	10.75 50%
	80mg Tab	10.00 52%
ANTI-DIABETES		
GLUCOTROL®	10mg Tab	5.75 55%
GLUCOTROL® XL	10mg Tab	8.50 54%
	20mg Tab	9.00 55%
ANTI-ASTHMA		
ACCOLATE®	20mg Tab	46.89 37%
ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS		
RIMACTANE®	300mg Tab	2.00 37%
	450mg Tab	10.00 40%
ANTI-INFECTIVES		
CIPRO®	250mg Cap	5.00 46%
	500mg Cap	17.50 50%
	250mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	106.50 55%
	500mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	213.00 55%
	500mg Diskit	89.50 50%
CIPRO® XR	500mg Cap	41.75 47%
	1000mg Cap	79.75 48%
	500mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	106.50 50%
	250mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	53.25 50%
	500mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	122.00 37%
	250mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	53.25 19%
	500mg Susp. 5 ml/ml	122.00 19%
	1000mg Susp.	173.75 28%
	500mg Cap	237.50 14%
	1000mg Cap	46.88 68%
CLEOCIN®	300mg Cap	5.00 17%
ANCOBON®	500mg Cap	7.00 26%
FOR HERPES, VARICELLA & ZOSTER/SHINGLES		
ANTIVIRAL® ACG	200mg Tab	2.68 49%
	800mg Tab	3.95 75%
VITAMIN C		
ASCORBIC ACID	500mg Tab	1.45 75%
FOR PAIN & FEVER/ HEADACHES	500mg Tab	1.20 67%
	120mg/5cc x 60ml	29.25 63%
FOR DIARRHEA		
LOMOTIL®	2mg Cap	6.68 66%
FOR COUGH		
ANDRICOL	15mg/5cc x 60ml	10.75 63%
	30mg/5cc x 120ml	20.75 63%
	60mg/5cc x 60ml	26.80 57%
	60mg/5cc x 100ml	150.00 40%
	60mg Tab	4.00 50%
	100mg Tab	1.00 50%
ANALGESICS/ MIGRAINE	8g/5cc x 60ml	50.00 40%

Distributed by: mercury drug

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-William Robert, Beaumont

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ENTERTAINMENT

Gino Bonnie G. Velarde

Oscars season in New York

By Alexis L. Lorenz
Contributor

NEW YORK—IT'S EXCITING to be living in New York City when Oscars season rolls around. Suddenly the loud, self-congratulatory awards show—which happens as far away from Gotham as possible, in LA—takes on a whole new dimension.

On Jan. 31, nominees for the 78th Academy Awards were announced. Of the major movies, 16 are from New York, and although New Yorkers love to poke fun at the whole movie-and-bling-bling parade—"so sushy," "so flashy," "so LA"—deep down inside Manhattanites are rooting for the hometown bets.

I've lived in New York for about five years now, and every year it's the same: Loud media chigde out from nominees who either live in, were born from, or have ties to, this city. This year is no exception.

Best Actor nominee Heath Ledger and his ex, best Supporting Actress hopeful Michelle Williams, live in Brooklyn. Their nominated "Brokeback Mountain" director, Ang Lee, lives in

We love to poke fun at the Academy Awards—so flashy, so LA—but deep down inside, we are rooting for the hometown bets

HEATH Ledger and Michelle Williams live in Brooklyn.

Oscars season in New York

From page A1-1

filmfanatics.net is a proud graduate of New York University's film school.

Another film! Actor nominee, Philip Seymour Hoffman, is a West Village fixture. Timing is, he is nominated for playing another famous New Yorker, author Truman Capote.

Other prominent Gotthamites on the ballot: Final Cameos! (Best Supporting Actor), Frances McDormand (Best Supporting Actress) and Heath Steinbeck (Best Original Screenplay).

Then there's the most iconic of New Yorkers...Woody Allen, nominated for his "Match Point" screenplay and considered the comeback story of the year.

Other films and key players to that year's races have connections to the city, best picture nominee "Good Night, and Good Luck" tackles 1950s journalism in the New York newsroom of the CBS TV network; "Munich" of a familiar," directed by New York mogul son Bob Shaw-hall, snagged six nods.

New Yorkers pride themselves in their blithe sophistication, glib humorlessness and their sense of irony. To them the Oscars—and LA—are the antithesis of New York's glamour and panache, and a perfect illustration of the two cities' mutual disunity.

For New Yorkers, Los Angelenos are, well, too tanned and too excitable. There's an inherent cachet in coming from New York, an achieved judgment that you're somehow geldom elsewhere, more bullish. This also indicates less tolerance for easy pretense and the frivolities of fame. New Yorkers, in the cozy of New Yorkers, are as much under and, indeed, as our celebs and those nominees.

Who cares about West Coast's Jennifer Lopez's or Hayden Haughdenne when we've got Renee Zellweger (a recent Manhattan transplant), Meryl Streep, Hilary Swank, Sarah Jessica Parker, Matthew Broderick and Robert De Niro?

Pit-bull blush when reading Lohan stories but unblush happy dormant serene Sofia as go on a shopping spree, or when Nicole Kidman is reportedly seen at the swanky Bryn restaurant in Chelsea.

Expat rights

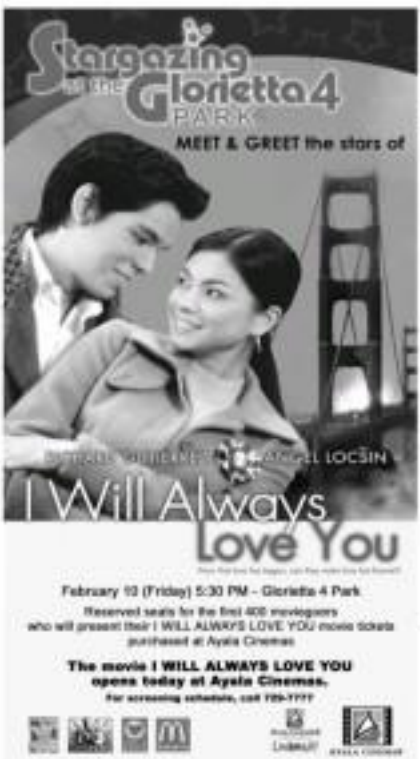
I once passed a man in midtown who looked like Guy Pierce, and subsidiaries Jessica? It was Guy Ritchie. James Gandolfini, of "Sopranos" nearly barreled right into me as a crowd elevator, to store, and what was my first thought? That he looked a lot like the unfriendly guy from my local pizza shop around the corner.

At the end of the day, New Yorkers don't care whether you make $20 million per movie or get free dibs on those new Marc Jacobs platforms, we walk past the velvet ropes at Jet spot Mercer.

As far as we're concerned, New York celebs are just like the rest of us, and we like cheering for the hometown folks because we see them as actual people. We walk on the same sidewalks, pass by the same homeless guy sleeping next to the subway entrance, smell the same garbage stench, hear the same deafening ambulance sirens, and try to avoid the same mob of tourists who trade us monopolizing street corners by walking side by side.

And so, so you if you pull some Hollywood power trip in New York? We have equal rights to your ass, that sidewalk space and that subway seat. Don't believe me? All kinds Of time once we see in Susan Lucci sighting.

So when will I be on Oscar night, March 5? Ill be home in Brooklyn watching New Yorkers step onto that West Coast red carpet with the effortless ease of an East Coast sophisticate. Whether or not the hometown folks win, here's something New Yorkers already know: When it comes to time zones, Oscar winners or anything else, New York is always ahead of the curve. Now, the envelope, please ...



George Clooney now gets a lot of respect

THE 2005 ACADEMY AWARDS won't be handed out until next March, but this early, the Oscars bid fair to be George Clooney's show. The movie hunk lensmaster the socks off everybody when he won three nominations for "Good Night and Good Luck," which he directed and co-wrote, and for his supporting performance in "Syriana."

In any other year, both films associated with Clooney have strong political content, proof positive that People magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive" has gone way beyond his hunky mug on TV and the movies.

"Good Night" demonstrates the role of media in a nation's life, and hits at threats against civil liberties, while "Syriana" explores the United States' interest in oil-rich countries' internal affairs.

Hear, Clooney runs pieces either political or news items in making cinema to the greatest extent seems important and controversial questions that other filmmakers are afraid to touch.

He says that both film people and viewers will be giving Clooney more respect from here on in! At age 44, Clooney must be breathing a sigh of relief that he now has a new, more substantial career threat to pursue, and can give his old Hollywood freak image a good, long rest!

Another upbeat effect of the 2005 Oscar nominations announcement is the fact that it upended up the local infusion of some productions.

For instance, "Walk the Line," which features the Oscar-nominated performances of Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon as Johnny Cash and June Carter, respectively, has opened in theaters here.

And Steven Spielberg's "Munich" opened yesterday, the hottest for local viewers, as are if they appear on days agree with the US Academy that it's one of the five best movies of 2005.

Incidentally, Spielberg's movie also scores high marks in the political or political terrorism arena, because it's about the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Now, if only "Intolerable Moments" and "Good Night and Good Luck" could also be rushed to our screens at noon as possible—and maybe "Crash" could be shown again—as local film buffs can participate more actively in discussions leading up to the Oscar awards next month.

Finally, we are excited to hear that the 2006 Oscar ceremonies will be hosted for the first time by Jon Stewart. The political satirist and pundit is a hoot on TV, so we hope that he'll score a direct hit in the Oscars, as well.

It's quite appropriate that Stewart is hosting this year's awards show because of the relatively high political content of the movies. So, just watch him go to town with his smoking salvos.

But, when push comes to shove, he'll have to do anything and everything else to keep the show humming along, as he can get good marks when he's compared to the awards' last host to date, Billy Crystal.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

REVIEW

Still sick

By Oliver M. Palumbo's
Contributor

"SAW II," SEQUEL TO the hit 2004 slasher-hit, returns us time in grossing out the audience.

In the first few minutes, we're immediately presented a gruesome death, self-inflicted by the victim's own hand.

It's about the first film's jarring fiction—extremely violent scenes.

The serial killer Jigsaw returns in several story victims, four instead of just keeping two shackled in a filthy bathroom, he coerces eight people into escaping a booby-trapped house. It's pretty obvious that they will die in cruel and painful ways.

Those who saw the first movie will note that this one incorporates a more fluffy wood feel.

Clichés

While doesn't mean it's more watchable, the visuals are usually dynamic and both more contrived. Many of the ideas have been recycled from the first film, but simplified. Several divide disguises into slasher-flick clichés.

But the script gives light to Jigsaw's intentions and cleverly twisted logic. The performances are also solid—played clinically, if a bit shrewdly—by Tobin Bell, it's a welcome highlight.

Even so, this sequel flashes a little weakly. New lines and seem to have been created to be addressed in another sequel.

Overall, this isn't as shocking or brutal as expected, partly because of some scene deletions, but it still isn't a movie to be enjoyed with popcorn.

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SCHEDULE/CAST SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

6 celebs reveal what they did for love

EVEN AFTER AFTER THE "HOWEVERS" tragedy, Valentine story Pinoys will still flock to join parades? Today someone lined up for the whole month. Let's just hope that the red letter day doesn't lack into a red short day. Be that as it may, the romantic fool in me wouldn't help contacting some stars for their Valentine thoughts. I asked them about the craziest thing they did for love. My own unrepentant famous anecdotes are too many to mention, but just to get the ball rolling and the lines flowing, ...

KIM Agcaoili and her boyfriend in school.

I have I wanted to say 'SF' (now or) to come home after we had a terrible fight. For numerous reasons, I had down to front of their gate, the driver on the door!

Nearest the most turns to jet silly and mushy. Valentine's gives us all the permission to be that way, baby!

Sofia Mae Quintos: I'm a martyr when I'm in love. The first time I cried on TV because I was so hurt and didn't care what people would say was the pinakahuling thing that I did because of love.

Gigi Alcasid: Travelling for two days straight that in flight doesn't just to be with my love is the most crazy thing I ever did.

Asia Agcaoili: I enrolled my boyfriend in a good university and paid for everything in the hope of having a bright future with him but we didn't end up together. What could be crazier than that?

Mark Herras: When I was still with Jennylyn Mercado, I lifted up her whole house with one pesos on our anniversary.

Maegan Aguilar: Shuttling between Munich and Manila many times over all in the name of love.

Aura Fernandez DIVINO: Let's just say that I have fallen head over heels in love so many times...where will I ever learn?

Christine & Mark!
HIGHNESS governor Mark Lapid was Christine

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I have my own outrageous anecdotes

Stars' special guest during her 17th bday bash. He guess her before and a bottle of Patron tequila. I asked Christine if she thinks Mark is boyfriend material. She smiled and said, "Oh yeah! He's nice, not just to me, but to everybody. We've been acquaintances since 4th level!"

Will love be there again. Like she did about Rampage de Leon on account of age difference. "Age doesn't matter" or "Show Asenso Jose?" Pick the correct answer, birthday girl!

FrancisM's sentiments

IN THE AFTERMATH of the "Howevers" incident, ever wonder how people from the other side of the fence...Chibi ?'s "Eat Bulaga!"...are dealing with it? I asked my "forever young" FrancisM (one of "Bulaga!!" hosts) about his sentiments. He sighed and replied, "All of us over here at 'Eat Bulaga' felt very sad. We prayed before the show started on Saturday. It's just too bad that, I think, there was lack of security. That whole tragedy was preventable. It wasn't just a matter of

RUFA MAE Quinto erupt on nationwide TV

a stalker press was at stake, what's a few hundred thousands thrown in for extra security measures. Furthermore, words like 'maybe' and 'however' I am familiar with examples because they almost always happen in such events.

I can almost hear Ellen rasping, "Impede impeded being, stamp it out!"

CANDY Pangilinan

Candy's back

AFTER being away from the limelight for a while, top comedienne Candy Pangilinan is back—and looking for a futuristic answer for her career thing with a little extra extravagance. Candy is set to take the Music Museum by storm on Feb. 15 as her comedy concert, "Candy's for Love!" She will perform several side-splitting sketches of seasons in their quest for true love. Visitors at the gate,

Faces of love

THE PROPER of last year's hit Valentine concert, "Faces of Love" featuring Gary Valenciano and Zsa Zsa Padilla goes onstage Feb. 18 at 8 pm. and 4th, '19, 7 p.m., at the SMC Tent, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. Tickets available at Ticketworld/National Bookstore branches. Call 891-9999.

Retro/Groove rift

AMATEUR groups composed of three to five members (male and female), aged 15 and above may join The 60's-80's Retro/Groove Competition. Repertoire should consist of songs from the 1960s to the '70s. Entry forms available at the 3rd & Proton Department of Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall, Marcos Highway, Cainta. Only the first 20 groups to submit complete requirements will qualify for the elimination round which starts March 4. Call 681-1680 loc. 126.

(E-mail:wearingbalancingfile@yahoo.com)

ROUNDUP

Seiko starrer

SARAH SEIKO IS "HELLO SARAH" IN U.S. VIDEO

Here to do a movie about the empowerment of women.

Rome, 66, widow of 2004 presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., was a popular actress in the 1960s. She appeared in Hollywood movies produced by Sampaguita Pictures, the company that discovered her.

Sales Mess production Bobbie Seybold became Entertainment on Tuesday that she got satisfied a movie currently, based on a novel by Jose Javier Reyes, would have Rome in the role of movie housewife to Lotso Gaston's moviegoing macho husband.

"It's the sort of their 40th wedding anniversary celebrities' children—especially Diana Zubiri, Diana Rei Pineda and Sean Dela Rosa—have been preparing for Rome's character decides to leave her husband.

"This is a refreshing role for Susan," he said. "But we are still negotiating."

Reyes is also directing the movie, according to Lee.

Rome' last film was 2003's 'Mano Po 2,' from Regal Entertainment. *(Ed Vallejo)*

US box-office

LOS ANGELES— "When a Stranger Calls," "The Night Mrs. Caraballo stood a baby sitter stranded by a telephone stalker, dialed to the top week and movie sale at $11.6 million at the box.

The top 10 movies at US and Canadian theaters Friday through Sunday, according to Exhibitor Relations, official box-office tickets:

(1) "When a Stranger Calls," $11.6M. (2) "My Baby's Daddy," $11.1M. (3) "Romeo Must Die," $9.1M. (4) "Underclassman," $8.6M. (5) "Wonderland," $5.3M.

(6) "Unfaithful," $5.2M. (7) "Hoodwinked," $4.9M. (8) "Hitch," $3.9M. (9) "Domino," $3.9M. (10) "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe," $3M.

Atienza's life

READERS brought out "Maalaala Mo Kaya" to the life story of Lito Atienza, mayor of Manila. The episode directed by Mac Cruz and written by Arlene Lumanlan stars Charley Rivera and Esther Rodriguez.

It is set in 1960s Manila. Lito grows up under the shadow of his father Pepe, a prominent lawyer who is running for office. Don Pepe faces hefty corruption charges against him as he campaigns, but his struggles and subsequent become an inspiration for his son.

Also in the cast are Manuel Chua, Kenneth Roxas, Jojo Pastrano, Joanna Torres and Tess Bernardino. Hilary Santos Concio is the

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XTRA

P20B worth of PLDT value wiped out in a day

INQUIRER MONITOR

Company execs puzzled by steep drop in stock price

By Dexter L. Lacza and Clarissa S. Batino

CLOSE TO P20 BILLION WORTH OF SHAREHOLDERS' VALUE IN Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) was wiped out in a single trading session yesterday as the company reeled from a downgrade by US-based investment firm Morgan Stanley.

The share price of the country's biggest listed firm plunged by 6.1 percent during frenzied trading on the Philippine Stock Exchange, ending at ₱1,680 apiece from the previous day's close of ₱1,790—a drop of ₱110 per share.

This reduced PLDT's market value to ₱303.9 billion from ₱323.8 billion a single day.

Company officials were puzzled by the huge sell-off for the second straight day. PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan said he did not know of anything "new or prospectively" that could have triggered yesterday's huge drop.

In fact, he said PLDT's conversion to Amsterdam terms compared to the same period of last year. Profits in 2005, according to PangiBinan, were more than ₱365 billion, another record high.

"With all these positive developments, the market is behaving irrationally," he said.

Stock market sources said the sharp drop might have been aggravated by economic selloff by creditors of subsidiary Philphone Telephone Corp., many of which have begun converting their PLDT preferred shares into common shares as early as three weeks ago.

A day earlier, Morgan Stanley issued a research note downgrading PLDT to "equal-weight" from "overweight," saying that the stock now had limited upside potential "after a strong rally in the shares [over] the past two years."

FOR MORE NEWS B2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Perez cliches SMIC directorship B2

$1.4B needed to put up new power plants in Luzon B2

Peso retreats on credit-rating worries

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY RETREATED from three-year highs on worries that Moody's, the most pessimistic among global credit-rating agencies, may not improve its outlook on the Philippines despite recent progress on fiscal reforms.

Currency traders also said the local currency fell to as low as 51.80 before closing at 51.755 yesterday from Tuesday's finish of 51.65 as the market anticipated the rollout of Vice Gov. Gregorio Tan's initial public offering.

But talks that Moody's Investor Service would likely keep its "negative" outlook on the sovereign credit rating—which meant that a downgrade is still possible over the near term—also prompted some traders to dump the peso in favor of the greenback.

The local currency, Asia's best performing currency last year when it rose by about 6 percent, thus bucked the uptrend among regional currencies yesterday.

A foreign bank trader said if Moody's would indeed keep the country on a negative watch, the peso's upward momentum might be spoiled. The local currency has now lost ground against the US dollar for two straight days.

The peso has rallied to a high of 51.37-41 earlier this week on strong equity inflows and easier sentiment on the country's economic fundamentals.

"The market has already factored in an improvement in the ratings," the trader said. "If this doesn't happen, the peso could fall back to 52.50 to 53 for definitely it's not going back to 56."

A source from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said Moody's has not yet finalized its latest assessment on the country.

"We're still preparing some data for them to include in their report," the source said. The source said there was still a chance that Moody's would give the country a more favorable rating.

Moody's rates the Philippines' long-term foreign-currency debt at four notches below investment grade while Standard & Poor's Ratings Services and Fitch Ratings rate the country at two and three notches below.

These rating agencies all placed Philippine credit on a "negative" watch last year after

PESO B2

Ex-Cabinet man joins SMIC board

Vince Perez replaces former trade official in SM holding firm

By Dimitri L. Lucas

TWO FORMER BANKING OFFICIALS OF THE Arroyo administration have joined the board of holding firm SM Investments Corp. (SMIC), the company said yesterday.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, SMIC executive vice president June L. Ho announced the appointment of Vicente S. Perez Jr. as its independent director of the company.

An investment banker by training, Perez served as secretary of the Department of Energy from 2001 to 2004. Prior to the Energy post, he served briefly as undersecretary for industry and investment at the Department of Trade and Industry. Also, he used to be managing head of the Board of Investments.

Perez replaces Gregory L. Domingo as the independent director of the Trinity-owned holding firm. He will also head the firm's audit committee which Domingo used to chair.

Domingo—who also served in government as undersecretary of Trade and Industry—was appointed by the SMIC board as executive director of the firm.

Their appointments were formalized in a board meeting held yesterday, the said.

SMIC is the holding company of the SM Group, one of the country's largest conglomerates, with a market capitalization of over P137 billion. Its business interests include Oil Prime Holdings Inc., which operates 28 Shell supermarkets all over the country.

SMIC also has under its control SM department stores, buildings in Banco de Oro Universal Bank and China Banking Corp., and interests in real estate development.

SMIC's shares were last traded on the stock market at P220 apiece.

Weird from our sponsor

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS, THE SM GROUP of small operator Henry Sy cobbles-or-million of pesos worth of ads from this newspaper.

It's a shade of the "buyout" which, as "punishment" some years ago, the bright boys of the man named Henry ... Peter, Hans ... imposed upon us. And we are still recovering—thank you—slow and shocking.

With this usual avant-the-medio "buyout" tactic, it's hard to say if the SM group only wants to cut on advertising expenses.

It's just that the SM group has this disgusting design to take over the country's third largest bank, Equitable PCIB, without spending a single centavo. It is the only way that one pension funds—the SSS and the GSIS—invested P26 billion in the bank.

And so this column must report and comment on the takeover. We believe in bank for the pension funds. Somebody in the SM group apparently does not celebrate dissent.

* * *

WHILE the SM group is embroiled in this trouble, word has been going around in big business concerning the, er, "godfather," of the takeover.

News comes a week from our sponsor. Somebody related to Globe/Ayala—Known to stay in a phone booth to the Philippine Stock Exchange—is the sponsor of Team Sy for this noted deal.

Team is the oldest among the six Sy siblings and the main architect of the takeover.

The "godfather," who also sits in the board of a financial group that was said to have problems with the SEC, is also one of the leaders of 300 Sun Cruz "Travel Club" de la Paz.

Being unashamedly in favor of the takeover, De La Paz is the most popular (at least to SSS members) among Team Sy's business in the Equitable PCIB deal.

Another backer of De La Paz is said to be a finance man who just recently became part of the core administration of Gloria Inc. (He looks like Finance Secretary Margie in "Juicy" Town, if I'm not mistaken.)

Do you think that leaders in this core administration are going to find out who's against? Or do you think she knows about the deal all along? It's her money, because there is an official secret from the Palace whatsoever.

* * *

IN OTHER countries, they do not allow the owners and representatives of a COMBY-DIG bank—usually, that is, which they intend of taking over another—to sit on the board of another publicly listed bank like Equitable PCI. Not here, boss.

Here, the so-called "conflict of interest," featuring the SM group in Equitable PCIB, is so obvious. The thought behind door and eyes bolted to prevent our interest, an SSS and GSIS member.

Granted that we are powerless SSS and GSIS member, Equitable PCIB nonetheless is still a listed company. There are other stockholders. They are at the losing end when a competing bank, like the Sm of the SM group, gets inside their bank.

You see, sitting on the board of Equitable PCI, plus serving as chairs of sensitive committees, are all "NOMBIC" people of Banco de Oro. They are Teresa Sy Juanillas Tan and Joaquin Villacorta Jr.

Teresa Sy heads Equitable PCIB's powerful executive committee, which reviews everything, while Tan heads the credit committee, which decides on major lendings.

For his part, Villacorta does not stop talking about "merger" and "capital call," as a way to "save" the bank. In fact, he is crucifying the takeover line of the SM group.

Sure, they all claim that they have already given up their positions in Banco de Oro and so, clearly there is no conflict. Sure, tell that to the marines!

Come on, they still represent the group that somebody in Ortigas, by turn, wants to take over the Equitable PCIB deal is a steep.

What can stop them from getting the trade secrets of Equitable PCI, or pinning the big clients, or eavesdropping the systems, or even sabotaging its operations? Of course, being decent people, they won't likely do these things.

Still, the danger is always there, not to mention the temptation, and what, say three SSS and GSIS members, is the Bangko Sentral doing about it? Nothing!

* * *

WE RIDE the SM group takes over Equitable PCIB, the SSS and GSIS pensioners in the bank will rue, after the "merger" will come the "capital call," which the pension funds cannot meet, plus other measures to dilute SSS and GSIS.

In effect, the SM group will be taking over the country's third largest bank without spending a single centavo. And this is the group that just withdrew to ads from this newspaper, in effect, using its money to save face and fin.

What if it succeeds in having its way with Equitable PCIB, or some other big business in the country for that matter, such as San Miguel Corp. (SMC)? How are going to be as the money of the Sy family?

Today the SM department stores are famous for "customer-mal" sales jobs.

What becomes of the girls after their customer visits SM expire? If you take young women from the provinces, then leave them on the city cast to their own devices, and there is no telling what they will resort to, say just to send some money home.

If the SM group would not hesitate to cut its money to favor its way with media, why couldn't they to Joe will his people to use the money to buy the SSS and GSIS out of Equitable PCIB instead?

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CIRCULAR NO. 509
Series of 2006

Subject: Participation in the Domestic Debt Exchange Offer of the Republic of the Philippines

The Monetary Board in its Resolution No. 101 dated 26 January 2006 approved the following guidelines on the treatment of securities received pursuant to the Domestic Debt Exchange Offer of the Republic of the Philippines for prudential reporting purposes:

(1) The exchange of securities booked under the Held to Maturity (HTM) category, shall be exempted from the "tainting" provision of Circular No. 476 dated 16 February 2005, which prohibits financial institutions from using the HTM category and requires reclassification of the entire HTM portfolio to the Available for Sale (AFS) category during the reporting year and for the succeeding two full financial years whenever a financial institution sells or reclassifies more than an insignificant amount of HTM investments before maturity other than for reasons specified under the said Circular. Provided, That the securities rejected shall continue to be booked under the HTM category; and

(2) Securities received in exchange for securities that are eligible reserves for liquidity floor and trust duties shall continue to be recognized as such.

This Circular shall take effect after fifteen (15) calendar days following its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board:

(Sgd.) JAMAEDO M. TETANGCO, JR.
Governor

01 February 2006

P20B worth of PLDT . . .

From page B1

"The conversion of preferred shares into common equity will dilute PLDT's earnings per share by 4 to 5 percent in 2006 to 2007, especially as the common shares have retained the P1,700 conversion price," Morgan Stanley said.

The investment house also said that PLDT was beginning to face significant headwind mainly due to the "changing dynamics in the ever changing telecommunications market landscape."

"Although fundamentals remain good, we see room for limited positive surprises given slowing mobile (phone) growth, exposure to voice minutes' pressure (VoIP) substitution, and revenue-able cannibalism," it said.

A week-market analyst pointed out, however, that Morgan Stanley did not recommend a "sell" on the stock, but merely opined that the upside was limited.

The analyst said the sell-off might have been prompted by profit-taking by holders of the firm's preferred shares, having since converted their holdings to common shares.

"We're talking about an extra 170 million shares flooding the market," he said, declining to be named. "That's a significant overhang."

Yesterday's drop in PLDT's price came after three successive days of gains. Nevertheless, the stock's share saw the price tumble from its high of P2,695 a share. PLDT's stock price has declined by a cumulative 11.1 percent since then.

It also triggered a sell-off in the PSE, with the Phisix dropping 30.46 points or 1.7 percent to 2,060.82 on P1.7 billion worth of transactions.

Of this amount, P778.3 million worth of stocks were attributed to the telecommunications giant, representing 43.23 percent of all market activity for the day.

The market was also talking about the feared impact of a new interest charge proposed by rival Globe Telecom Inc. on PLDT earnings.

Across charges or termination rates are paid by the phone companies that makes the call. Since PLDT is the biggest player, bulk of the local traffic ends up on its network. In terms of traffic coming from the United States, the Philippines is getting the fourth largest volume.

Locally, about 25 to 35 percent of PLDT's voice minutes from cells from other networks. Between 65 and 75 percent in, ers, since are generated within its pool of more than 20 million mobile subscribers and 2.1 million landline customers.

Second-rank Globe wants to slash access charges on the lines that when pay one another to complete calls by 62.5 percent to P1.50 a minute from P4 for domestic calls from landline to mobile and mobile to mobile and by 83 percent to P1 per minute to mobile-to-landline and between landline phones from the current rate of P3.

Globe also recommended a 75 percent drop in termination fees of overseas calls to landline at 1 P1 cents a minute from the current 13 cents while fees on overseas calls to mobile phones must also go down by 56.25 percent to 7 1/8 cents a minute from the current 16 1/8 cents.

PLDT had rejected such proposals, saying the government regulator Napoleon Nazarenco said Globe's proposal "was just a ploy."

"Investors should not worry because access rates are determined bilaterally," he said.

Peso retreats . . .

From page B1

the Supreme Court suspended the implementation of the expanded value-added tax, the consequence of the government's plan to cut the fast-growing fiscal deficit, and because of the political turbulence that threatened

Stocks down . . .

From page B1

shares worth P1.7 billion.

Losers led gainers 32 to 22, and 43 stocks were unchanged.

It was the weakest finish in seven consecutive sessions.

The all-shares index plunged 42.44 points to 1,731.31, with all sub-indices ending lower.

"The downgrade on PLDT pulled down other stocks as well," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities Inc. (See chart on the Page B1.)

Traders said the market had been due for a correction after strong gains in January that were partly due to an improving outlook on how the government handles its finances. AFP

Maynilad posted ₱2.1B in net profit for 2005

By Christine A. Gaylican

MAYNILAD WATER Services Inc. (MWSI) posted a net income of P2.1 billion for 2005 due to savings from interest payments and lower penalties/debt costs.

This was one notch of in the unaudited financial report submitted by Maynilad for review by the auditing firm Sycip, Gorres and Velayo, said Ricardo Bernal. He, the designated rehabilitation court receiver for the Lopez-led utility.

"The company used contractual interest rates that resulted in savings as the rehabilitation plan contained provisions that have been approved by the courts," Bernal explained.

The audited data the latest financial performance was also due to the company's efforts to improve its service and area development and debt-tightening measure we took to operating costs.

Bernal also said the 2005 financial performance of Maynilad bode well for the company's re-privatization. He noted that a rebidding for the same concession area could be held in May or June this year as the terms of reference were now being drawn up.

This would be the first time in seven years for the new concession to award a private, Maynilad president Fernito Ferrer said.

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TOYOTA

$1.4B needed to put up new power plants in Luzon

Additional capacity won't be required until 2010, says DOE

By Abigail L. Ho

SOME $1.4 BILLION IN NEW GENERATION should be infused into the Luzon grid by 2010 to prevent a power crisis in the country's biggest power grid, the Department of Energy said.

Refuting the National Economic and Development Authority's claims of a power shortfall in Luzon as early as this year, Energy Undersecretary Melinda Ocampo said the "critical period" for Luzon would not come until 2010.

By that time, she said the grid would need a new peaking plant and a mid-range plant the following year. These would require about $1.4 billion in new investments.

Projected capacity additions by 2010 are expected to come from the following: the 40-megawatt (MW) Tarlac Bioenergy project in 2006, the 44-MW North Luzon Phase II Wind Project in 2005, the 1,000-1,300-MW Bataan Super Fuel Consortium gas plant in 2011 or 2012, and the 600-MW Bataan Greenfield plant between 2010 and 2012.

Other projects are the 500-300 Limay plant conversion in 2010, the 600-MW Bhan gas-fired power plant expansion in 2009, the 550-MW San Gabriel power plant in 2009, the 270 Pagbilao Coal II in 2010, the 60-MW Manito-Kinabuang geothermal project in 2010, the 40-MW Tanawon project in 2009, the 440-MW Bakun plant conversion in 2012, and the 150,000-MW Bacon plant conversion in 2013.

According to data from the DOE, the Luzon grid currently has an installed generating capacity of 12,076 MW, with dependable capacity of 10,305 MW.

Ocampo said that with this dependable capacity and a projected peak demand of only 6,470 MW this year, the can't that the Luzon grid would need new capacity would be at the end of 2010. The grid has an average grass reserve margin of about 3,900 MW.

The DOE expects demand in Luzon to grow by 4.3 percent a year.

The installation of new capacity could be delayed if consumers would support favorably to the government's efforts to promote demand management.

The National Power Corp. said the power supply situation in the country remained stable, and there was no need to panic amid speculations of a power crisis.

Napocor president Cyril del Callar said the country's power supply was enough to support the projected economic growth of 5.7 percent.

Globe spending $100M to start 3G operations

By Cielrea S. Bedina

GLOBE TELECTRONIC TEXTER. day said it would initially spend about $100 million to roll out its third-generation or 3G mobile service, which would be made available to subscribers within the first quarter.

"No customer phones like us and will not hardly quick grassroot opening infrastructure," said Globe president Gerardo Ablaza.

He said the $100 million was the amount the company gained in its application for incentives with the Board of Investments.

The parent company of Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom is also expanding ties with telcos in the region to bring down the cost of mobile services for Filipinos here and abroad. Land rates are applied to calls between Globe and Singtel subscribers.

Ablaza said the company would hold talks with Malaysian Maxis, Hong Kong's CSL and Taiwan Mobile—all 3G operators now—for an arrangement that would allow Globe to use their networks without regional players.

There are more than 130,000 Filipinos in Singapore, almost 200,000 in Hong Kong, more than 160,000 in Taiwan, and more than 350,000 in Malaysia.

Ablaza said the volume of calls and text messages between Globe and Singtel had more than doubled since the pricing scheme was launched last year.

"We think we can do the same thing with other countries where there are many overseas Filipino workers," said the Globe chief.

Globe will prioritize its ties with other members of the Bridge Mobile Alliance, which co-founded in November 2003.

GOINGS-ON

CebuPac's on-line booking

CEBU PACIFIC AIR has co-launched its website with real-time booking capability and online booking incentives and promotions.

The airline's improved website (www.cebupacificair.com) allows passengers to book their flights as late as three hours before departure time and to pay and get their e-tickets on-line.

Globalink

GLOBALINK, a knowledge-based legal outsourcing company, has opened a unit in Manila.

The local unit operates under the direct supervision of former New York-based lawyer Elie Sumner and US immigration law firm Lord Kramer LLC.

Globalink also employs graduates of top Philippine law schools with US-compatible training.

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BUSINESS

Ecozones in Mindanao

DECADES AGO, THE LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE facilities was a major problem that discouraged investors from doing business in Mindanao. The costs of transportation and communication were too high.

Infrastructure in place

That problem is not exactly a thing of the past, as there are still a lot issues to be done. However, the situation now is a lot better than what it was. Road networks, airports, seaports, telecommunications and other facilities are now in place. These improvements did not only cut the cost of doing business in Mindanao, but also made it more convenient and profitable.

Getting more investments has always been a tough challenge for the government and the private sector. Even if the required facilities were in place, they have to contend with the "image problem" of Mindanao, particularly with regard to the peace and order situation. But these constraints are being addressed through appropriate investment promotion and acquisition strategies.

The strategies in promoting Mindanao as an investment destination are consistent with the overall investment promotion program of the country. One of these is the creation of economic zones.

As defined in Republic Act No. 7916, or the The Special Economic Zone Act of 1995, ecozones are selected areas with highly developed or which have the potential to be developed into agro-industrial, industrial-cum-tourism, commercial, banking, investment and financial centers.

An ecozone may contain any or all of the following: Industrial estates, export processing zones, free trade zones, and tourist/recreational centers.

The law states that "the government shall actively encourage, promote, induce and accelerate a sound and balanced industrial, economic and social development of the country in order to provide jobs to the people optimally close to the rural areas, increase their productivity and their individual and family incomes, and thereby improve the level and quality of their living conditions through the establishment of special economic zones in suitable and strategic locations in the country."

Among the privileges granted to ecozone business under RA 7916 is exemption from national and local taxes.

Mindanao ecozones

There are 21 ecozones in Mindanao that were registered with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA).

In Western Mindanao, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority-operated Zamboanga Industrial Park in Zamboanga City is ready for location, preferably light to medium scale, non-pollutive industries.

In Northern Mindanao, the Misamis Oriental Ecozone in Jasaan prefers electronics industries. The Pueblo de Oro IT Park in Cagayan de Oro City prefers IT-related industries.

Development is still underway at the First Cagayan de Oro Industrial Park in Lao, Iligan, Villanueva, Misamis Oriental.

The 62-hectare managed Ecozone Development Zone in Pikkumkok, South Cotabato, prefers food and vegetable processing, asset processing, quick frozen products, and corn and flour milling.

In Barangay Calumpang, General Santos City, the 19-hectare SOCCSKSargen Economic Enterprise Zone is also ready for location.

Development is underway in five other ecozones in the region. Agro Ecozone Special Economic Zone in Barangay Matbuan, Tagum City; Filinvest Technology Park, Financial Center in Tambler, General Santos City; General Santos Special Economic Zone, also in Tambler, General Santos City; Sarangani Economic Development Zone in Maitum, Polomolok, South Cotabato; and Tiger Valley Industrial Estate in Ellmar 6, Polomolok, South Cotabato.

Three ecozones are being built in Iligan City of General Santos. These are the CEP Agro Industrial Park, Global Ispat Industrial Park, and NSC Special Economic Zone.

In the Caraga Region, the Hilusso Industrial Estate in Nasno Island, Surigao del Norte, is ready for location, preferably nickel refinery operations, service and ancillary providers, support industries to nickel refinery and downstream industries.

The Mountaine Technological & Environmental Park in Miligue, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur is ready for investors in pulp, paper and other wood-based industries.

In Nasipit, Agusan del Norte, the Tubay Agro Processing Center is also ready for location.

In the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the Maguindanao Ecozone is being developed in Parang, Maguindanao.

Invest in Mindanao

The entire Mindanao has ready-to-occupy locations for investors who want to do business in the country's second largest island.

These ecozones make doing business in Mindanao very convenient. They also offer opportunity for investors to be part of the peace and development efforts for the island and the country, in general.

(Jed Ilagan then is co-advocate for Mindanao and chair of the Mindanao Commission of Peace and Reinvestment Development and Reinvestment Core Board chair of the Mindanao PEZ Mindanao representative, Export Development Council, and chair, Art Region Foundation. E-mail comments to jed@mindanaoworks.com.)

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Jed Ilagan then

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LIFESTYLE

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A love affair with ostrich

OSTRICH on the rescue! The "red meat" of the third millennium

SINCE AGAIN, IT'S VALENTINE'S DAY SOON, through Kitchen Rescue, people have asked me how to keep the heart healthy.

The answers are quite simple. Much as you can, stay away from stress; exercise; heed your mother's advice on what to dare or not to; and eat ostrich!

KITCHEN RESCUE

Magsie Aspiras

Let's not discuss our mother's choices, but the mighty big bird that has much to offer. Ostrich is considered the new "red meat" of the third millennium.

Contrary to perception, they are clean, fed only with grains, poultry pellets and grass. It tastes wonderful, and takes easily to the flavor of the ingredients used to cook it. Truth is, it tastes like beef yet with 2/3 less fat. It is low on cholesterol and calories. (See chart.) If the cuts are cooked right, the fibers melt in your mouth while the stew cuts are only comparable to the toughened yet less healthy chuck! So, it is no joke to the bird!

I put my love for ostrich meat aside for a time when the supply was erratic and the birds I got had been frozen since Valentine 2004 and were a no-response.

Second chance

Recently, I decided to give my love affair with it a second chance. I visited Don Francisco Farms in Davao in order. Thing is, you can specify how old you want the bird to be and it is slaughtered only upon your order! The meat is then flown in to Manila, ready for pickup, at very cheaper prices than if those sold home-frozen! So it was a love affair that did not take much effort to rekindle!

I got my fillets and did a classic (for those contemplating on a lifestyle change, without giving up meat). (Fillets are upper thigh and back—cap loin, inside strip, outside strip, tenderloin—the most tender parts. The general rule is: the closer to the bone, the more tender the cut. Stew cuts are from the running muscles; unlike other poultry, ostrich meat does not come in breast cuts.)

I did everything conceivable to the meat, both at home and at work—teamed with Enzo Coffee Crust, turned to "galantinas" stews of Beaujolpiere, Adobo and Pinoybong, pan-fried with onion jam and grilled, as I would any kind of steak. Everyone loved it! The trick was not to kill those with heart blues that it was ostrich. Even my little Dogo ate it with great gusto!

The ranch

According to Oliver, the ostrich ranch came to be once upon a time in 1999.

"Wanting to add to the attractions at Malagos Garden Resort (the first property in the Philippines for wildlife installation management, waste management and outreach education by Audubon International and voted 39th in the world), we thought of putting up a bird park. That my husband, Dr Bo, is a vet and I an animal nutritionist, seemed good enough reason to try.

"With imported pheasants and waterfowl, we moved our flock breeding and display area. Then we got a trio of the biggest bird in the world, the ostrich (one male and two females) to add to our growing number of pets. We named them Rock, Tetchard Gere.

"After two years, we had our first egg, which hatched after 42 days. We named him Prince. Lots of eggs followed and before we knew it, we had Separate, Stevie, Quanto, Elmo... I mean! We ran out of names. On the first breeding year, we had about 30 chicks. The next year we had about a hundred chicks! The third year we were forced to rank the first month's brood... wonderful for vendors."

"Aside from meat, we sell the ostrich to zoos, private collectors and those who want to start an ostrich ranch. We train and transfer technology to help get the farm going. There are years that males get left behind in favor of likely-to-lay females. So we fatten the males to about 120-150 kilos and slaughter them for meat at about 10-12 months. I find that, at this age, the bird gives the best yield. The tender cuts are vacuum-packed for restaurants, the non-tender ones get to be cut into medallions for marinating, and the toughest parts, ground. The stewing ones are made into a meaty calderetta and the corresponding small muscle group, cordon bleu tender salpicado by my daughter, Ingrid."

"Nothing goes to waste. Feathers are turned to dream-catchers, fans and manganitos masks; bones, into skeleton displays; fat, into special soap combined with our goats' milk. The skin and to the tannery and turned into leather. The nails become paper weights and the empty eggshells become lamps."

Oliver ends by encouraging those with the land to raise these awesome birds. "On the third year, if you take away, they give you just a call, while ostriches give 20 chicks!"

Economics-wise, it is a much better proposition!

Contact Olive Dantzopulos at 895-7960/289. Next week, easy and delicious ostrich recipes!

Until then, keep the heart healthy and Happy Valentine's Day!

E-mail the author at magsie@inquirer.com.ph

How ostrich compares with other meats

Type	Calories	Protein %	Fat Gr.	Cholesterol Mg	Iron Mg
Ostrich	140	26.9	3	83	3.5
Beef (lean steak)	211	25.9	8.3	86	3
Chicken (Breast)	180	28.9	7.4	89	1.2
Pork (lean)	212	26.3	8.7	86	1.1
Turkey (Breast)	170	29.3	5	78	1.6

A guided tour of a food fair

FOR BRAMMATT, IT'S NOT uncommon who usually decides what we are going to have. He rummages through the pantry and makes his choice then announces the result.

One morning, he excitedly told me we would be having beef tuna. On the platter were small round pieces, more sausage than tuna-shaped. Since tuna was sometimes boiled with bees, the name wasn't surprising. What amazed me was that the beef tuna was from his adventure of the day before.

The adventure turned out to be a walk through the food fair in Megamall in Mandaluyong a week ago. He and his friends, who were at the mall every Saturday, decided to find out what the fair was all about.

He happily reported that there didn't seem to be any chinese or ethnic (read: fast-food) fusion. They ate through all the booths, trying the "free tuna" pieces—crispy lalong, a myriad of pasta sauces, and the toasts, of course.

He found the chocolate drink so he bought one cylinder of tablea. I reminded him that his grandmother's tablea in Leyte was better because it was made of pure cocoa. He knew that but enjoyed the blend of buying his own chocolate.

And he enjoyed the thought that he was first-in-the-list, a choice he knows I would go in as part of my work.

Hurried tour

So that was served as my palate the next day, a short, hurried tour because we had to be on time for a Sunday lunch with the family.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

At food fairs, many conventionally look for new products, a different take on the usual. I've had friends who complained that there were no longer worth going to because there was nothing new.

But I do know new things, not necessarily products, but new approaches, as well as new marketing strategies. There are all valuable lessons.

Take the booth Chanee Chanee. I told my son it was the colourful name of the kangaw. On top of the table were pots of bread spreads. One was chopping kangaw processed with cream cheese, another with liver as because paté and the last and subsequent by egg flavor. Oh yes, they do have the normal kangaw poultry embalo beans dating.

The most habitual the roasted (the source who didn't have his name on the card) and kangaw gulay were not available, that if there was no "value-added" option, their fatigued business in San Juan, Batangas, wouldn't even pay for the break.

A little help

How did they develop these bread spreads? With the help of the Bureau of Food and Drug, he said. Now, he claimed, it's the government that takes lessons from his group.

The government, particularly the Department of Agriculture, had the biggest booth there. I suppose it was an occasion to showcase what the department had been doing to help the food industry.

I asked one of those manning the place what help exactly was extended. She grasped for answers. I decided to help her. Packaging? Yes, she said. Product development? Yes, she said. I cupped the invention and just bought the pili products from Bicol—that's enchanting!

On the Go Visayans is the company that makes the beef tuna. They had sausages, embutido of pork and chicken and kangaw relleno. No pronunciation, they claimed. All meat or, in the case of the kangaw relleno, no vegetables, pure fish. Now that's the way to sell. But why can't it that the product tasted better there than it did at home?

Instant lectures

Here and there, videos you asked about a product, you get a lecture. As soon as are snapped to current the brown rice, the seller cried how the healthy bran was still there and how the rice was organically grown. The spiel was so inspiring it made you guilty not to buy even if bagging assured excellent was such a meal-free.

Others lined to dress up their product. A bottle of sinamak from Bacolod had on a hat and a bandana. The vinegar was even incorporated chili and longkanisa (galegal) didn't need the pin such but it did make a grand gift idea.

Equipment demonstrations were going on in many booths. A rocker advanced packaging machine was spitting out octagonal boxes almost every second. The plastic cover of a cheaper version of the food processor was thrown some feet away to show its durability. The same positioned by the plastic cover bouncing off the counter three was duplicated elsewhere, this time even louder in the vendor banged on the steel stem the was selling.

Some local government organizations were helping the food processing industry to produce and market products. Tarak Industries displayed the province's best, most of which I had the good fortune of tasting on site—chicharon and mimasa (macaroni noodles) of pahkuan fame.

SINAMAK: It was discovered... all dressed up

More fairs

Months from now, there will be other fairs highlighting food as well as other products of a leading province or region. It's an occasion to taste specialties not always available in those islands. Those who miss the food of their hometowns as well as those who have happily discovered how much goodness is not there will be grateful for the opportunity.

Every food fair also has cooking demonstrations. I am hoping that some traditional cooking can be part of the program. We'd really love to see how the pinakpakan of the Cordilleras is done, that soup dish of chicken killed silently (to have its blood retained) and then bone crushed to death, to made. To how to do the colorful biping, braided rice crackers that are also used as decor in the Pahiyas fiesta of Lucban, Quezon.

My son, my guide, soon

PAHIYAS LOOKS, atmospheric and also tastes of Lulo F

through each booth, tasted everything, commented on this and that, asked for brochures and even inquired if their products were in foreign stores.

I wish I could claim he had been well trained, but I can't. He's just interested because he loves to eat.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood@yahoo.com

Dealing with bad customer relations

CONSUMERS WITH COMplaints about warranties and purchases that turn out to be lemons can seek redress with the Department of Trade and Industry.

But where do they go for complaints not covered by the Consumer Protection Act such as customer abuse, non-discrimination, accidents due to carelessness by establishments, and so on?

Take the following experiences:

JP Medina said he was treated nasty from a popular restaurant in Greenhill all because he was gay to dine e-mail, he explained that he was looking for a table when a waiter approached him and said all tables were taken. He looked around and saw several vacant tables. Then and there, he felt something was wrong.

When he ordered his wine, pointing out the vacant tables, the waiter blurted out, "Midnight pang pinag-uusapan ng aming set na hindi daw po kami tanggapin ng gay customers!"

Cel Dalmazar of Salcedo Place, Makati, wanted to know where calling someone "manang" becomes insulting as he refused his "unbelievable experience."

In a Greenhills restaurant, he asked a waiter, "Manang, ano ito ba ang ok dito?" In his surprise, the waiter gave him dagger looks and rudely snapped back, "Don't call me 'manang!' Hindi ako 'manang!' May pangalan akin! Ayan o!"

Even after he complained to the manager, Salvacar said the waiter continued his insults, saying, "Tinatawag mo akong manang e mas matanda ka tanning manyak ka eh!"

The waiter was suspended by management but Salvacar felt he should not be subjected to return to his job. The restaurant still could not understand why the waiter took offense to being called manang, a term of respect among Visayans.

Marivelle E. Hallera-Garcia, a technical support representative of eMobile Global Solutions, Inc., had a more expensive one. She slipped and fell on pieces of broken glass on the wet floor in a section of Gateway Mall. Lucky for her, an attentive guard named Henry Tumon promptly accompanied her to a clinic for first-aid treatment. After that, she was transported to World City Medical to a medical team who was provided by the doctors on Centro patient duty.

Garcia commented: "I appreciate that the establishment paid the hospital bill but I still [want] to raise the following points and issues: first, why didn't the maintenance staff clean up the broken pieces right away or put a warning sign around the area. Why was there no first aid clinic [inside] the building?"

The same story is there proof that sometimes establishments have no concern for child consumers is absurd. Examples are cashiers who do not issue receipts, slow service, untidy toilets, wet floor, a food concession looking out of the window.

"To cases that are not resolved at management level, I will send a letter to the consumer desk of the Department of Trade and Industry, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, or another agency.

"I guess there also has to be some kind of a movement on consumer rights protection to call the attention of businesses on their responsibilities to their customers, among others."

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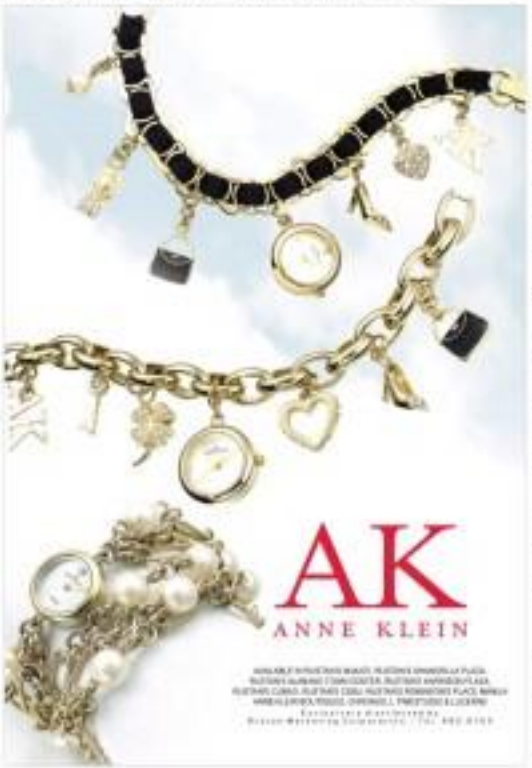

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